

Savage  
politics  
in Illinois

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# IN THESE TIMES

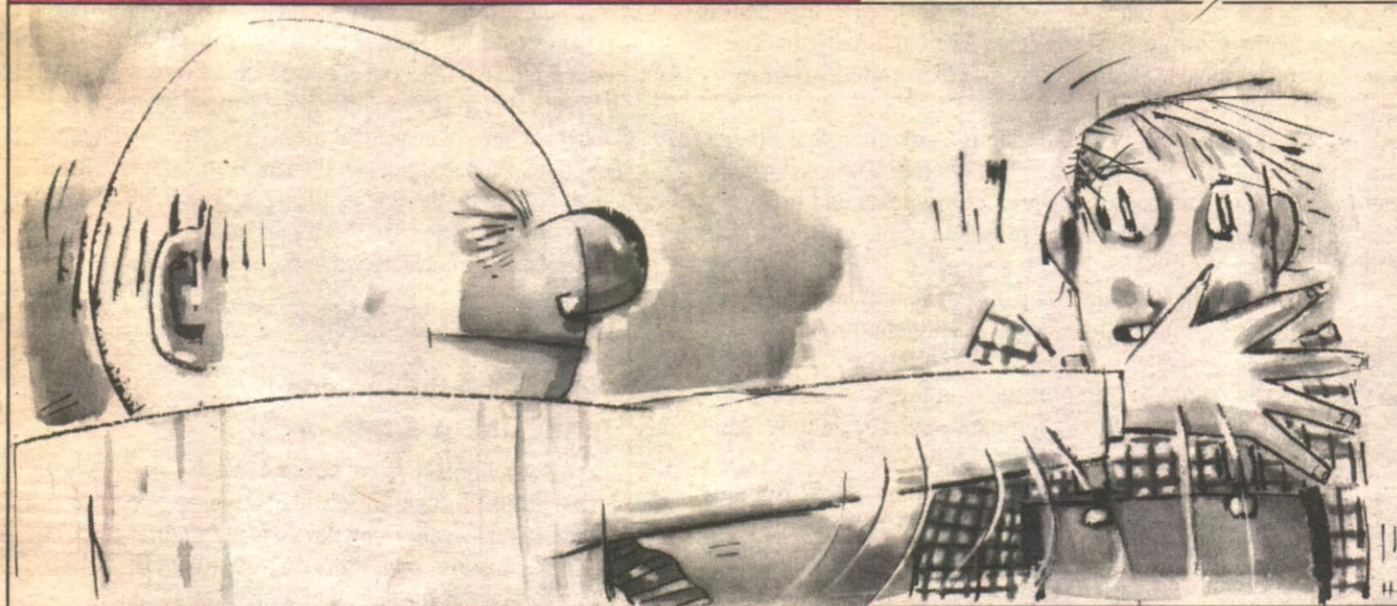
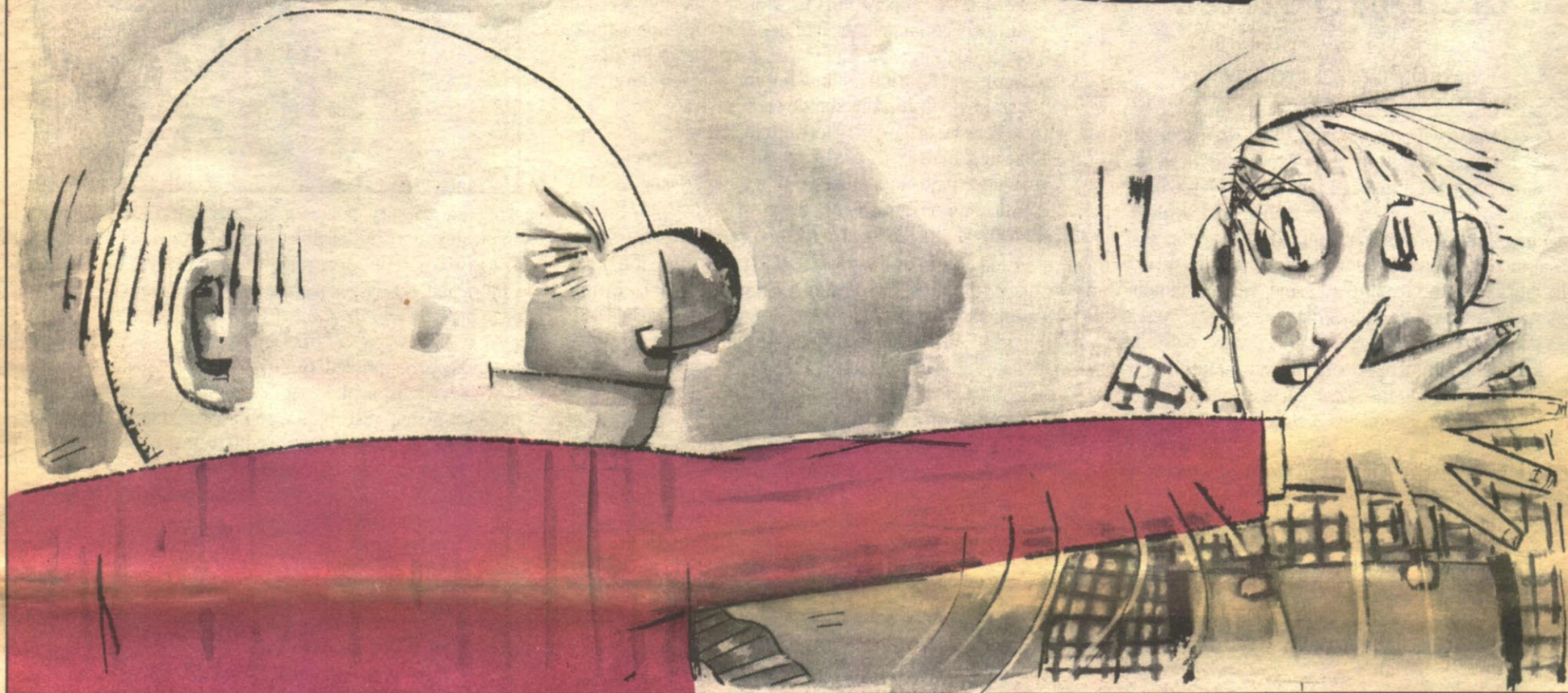
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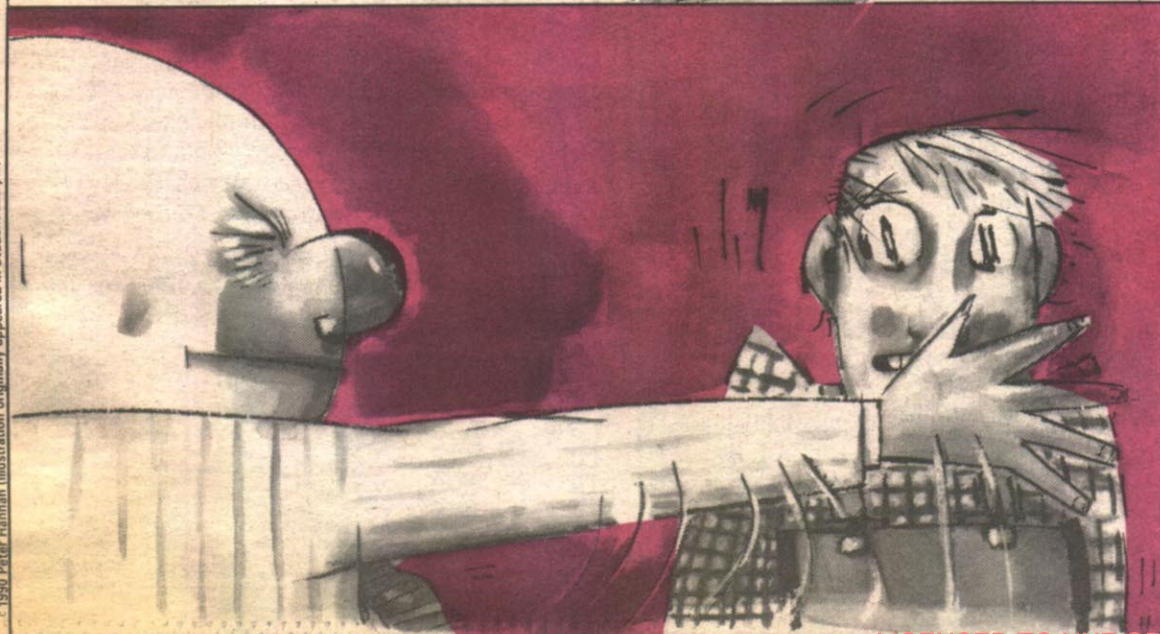
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## TAKING *SLAPPS*

at the First Amendment



**Strategic  
Lawsuits  
Against  
Public  
Participation  
chill freedom  
of expression.**



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## A case of labor blues at the *Daily News*

By Cara Letofsky

NEW YORK

As contracts with the 10 unions that represent employees of the New York *Daily News* expire this week, a strike—or at least a management lockout—seems imminent. Amid accusations of overmanning and “feather-bedding,” management has demanded large concessions from unions, deeming them necessary for the survival of the city’s favorite 71-year-old tabloid. While mailroom workers voted two weeks ago to strike if necessary, *News* printers declared March 22 that they would cross picket lines.

“Regaining full management of manufacturing and distribution are among the *News*’ goals for the 1990 labor negotiations,” says publisher James Hoge. It is this hard-line strategy, along with Hoge’s vow to publish even in the event of a strike, that has made *News* workers very nervous.

If the *News* succeeds in pumping out a paper with scab labor, many of the 2,466 union jobs will be lost. If the unions succeed in stopping production of the paper, New York’s other money-losing tabloids, the *Post* and *New York Newsday*, will pick up the *News*’ readers, perhaps damaging the daily irreparably. In either case, the battle will be a fierce one.

Past labor disputes have taken their toll on the city’s once-thriving newspaper business, which at one point boasted 19 dailies. A series of strikes in the ‘60s quickened the fall of papers such as the *Herald Tribune* and the *Journal-American*. A 1978 *Daily News* strike lasted three months and was marked by violence and arrests.

Since early 1989 the *News* has been waging a carefully orchestrated campaign aimed at putting the unions on the defensive and creating a favorable public profile for

its management. In March 1989, management hired the Tennessee-based law firm King & Ballou, a firm the AFL-CIO has labeled as union busters.

Confronting the *News* from labor’s corner is the D.C.-based Kamber Group, a pro-union public-relations firm. **Hometown blues:** Everyone agrees that the *News*, “New York’s Hometown Newspaper,” is in dire financial straits. According to management, the paper has lost \$115 million during the past decade on revenues of \$4 billion. As of December 1989, circulation is at 1,212,000 and has been declining steadily since 1970, due to heightened competition and the migration to the suburbs of blue-collar workers. For 1989, the paper is claiming losses of “a few million” on revenues of \$420 million.

Management claims it needs union paybacks to survive, and union members are convinced that the Chicago-based Tribune Company, owner of the *Daily News*, is just looking for a way out of New York. In 1982, as the family-owned Tribune Company was preparing to go public, employees were asked for concessions to “stop the bleeding.” During contract negotiations, the Tribune Company offered the *News* to Joe Albritton, an entrepreneur known for closing newspapers, for \$100 million, but the deal fell through, apparently because the shutdown costs were too high. New York labor lawyer Theodore Kheel, who estimates the actual 1982 costs of buying out pension benefits, severance pay and lifetime contract concessions at \$300 to \$400 million, now places the closing costs at \$100 million, due to 1982 and 1987 union concessions.

In addition to owning its flagship newspaper, the *Chicago Tribune*, the \$2 billion Tribune Company owns six other dailies, six television stations and baseball’s Chicago Cubs. The corporation’s profits are steadily growing, up 15.2 percent in 1989. But union leaders believe these earnings have been made at their expense.

**Broken promises:** During the *News*’ 1986-87 negotiations, a virtual dress rehearsal for the current round, the Tribune Company cited a report by consultants McKinsey & Co. warning that the paper would not make it into the ‘90s without investing an estimated \$300 million in new presses. On the promise of modernization and investment, the unions granted concessions totaling \$30 million. But the new presses never arrived.

Michael Alvino, the president of the Newspapers and Mail Deliverers Union, called the *News*’ failure to invest “the largest double-cross ever perpetrated in the history of the newspaper business.” John Sloan, vice president of human resources at the *Daily News* and *News* management spokesperson, denies that the promise was ever made.

It has always been the unions’ contention that Charles Brumback, president and chief operating officer for the Tribune Company, is behind these threats and broken promises. Brumback was president of the *Chicago Tribune* during the 1985 strike that decimated three of the paper’s unions. The Tribune Company applauded him for “dramatically improving the editorial quality and profitability of [the] newspaper.”

One thing is clear: both sides in this study in labor strife have set out on a full-blown public-relations battle to win the hearts and minds of New Yorkers.

In the summer of 1989 publisher Hoge, along with other *News* representatives, went to London to visit Rupert Murdoch’s “Fort Wapping,” the infamous high-security printing plant used to break Murdoch’s Fleet Street unions in 1986. Later various non-union *News* employees were sent to the company’s Fort Lauderdale *News/Sun-Sentinel* to learn the ropes of running presses in the event of a *Daily News* strike.

**Vanity’s bonfire:** Then came a salvo shot from a battlefield largely unknown to most of New York’s blue-collar workers: the glossy monthly celebrity magazine *Vanity Fair*. The blond, blue-eyed Hoge was photographed in the October 1989 issue at his \$1.2 million Gramercy Park duplex, paid for with a loan from the Tribune Company. “In his fight to save America’s biggest-selling tabloid,” the article prefaced, “Hoge will confront the toughest unions in the business.”

It was soon reported by the *New York Times* that author Edward Klein was fed the story by Hoge’s publicist, John Scanlon. Despite Klein’s claim that he reported the story objectively, Scanlon was so sure of its pro-management stance that he pre-ordered 5,000 copies to be sent to ad-

vertisers and other “influential” New Yorkers.

While Hoge has been out on the New York breakfast tour, guaranteeing advertisers that the *News* will publish in the event of a walkout, the Allied Printing Trades Council has been distributing press releases and the *Real News*—the unions’ version of a strike paper—accusing the Tribune Company of having “declared war on the working people of the *Daily News*.”

Since negotiations began in January, the *News* has lined up a staff gathered from the Tribune Company’s other non-union newspapers. In case the newspaper’s Manhattan offices are sabotaged, a newsroom, complete with two dozen computers, has been set up in a former Sears warehouse in North Bergen, N.J.

A want ad placed by the *News* in late February in the *New York Times* and *New York Newsday* called for security guards with up to five years experience and a back-

## INSIDE STORY

ground in military, police or security work. The ad said applicants must be “eligible to qualify for a New York City pistol permit.” According to *Newsday*, the *News* editors and executives also have published a mock 32-page paper.

As in all newspaper strikes, distribution—whether or not the paper, if printed, can reach the newsstands—will prove key in this fight. In addition to what Sloan calls “contingency plans,” distribution routes would be sold to delivery drivers under an “innovative marketing plan.” While Sloan insists this plan has nothing to do with the negotiations, it would undoubtedly divide the unions and make entrepreneurs out of some union members.

“We have no intention of being suckered into that,” said Alvino during the Allied Printing Trades Council’s press conference held at the end of January. “If they [*News*] need relief, let them come to us. If there is waste, let them show us where it is. We will negotiate, negotiate, negotiate.” Also present at the press conference was labor lawyer Kheel, who announced the creation of an employee stock-ownership plan trust that would act as a buyer in case the Tribune Company does put the *News* up for sale.

It seems an agreement is nowhere in sight. Many union members believe management at the *News* will simply implement un negotiated unilateral changes in work rules, thereby pressuring the unions to strike. “The bottom line,” says McDonald, “is to save those jobs.”

Cara Letofsky is a freelance writer based in New York.

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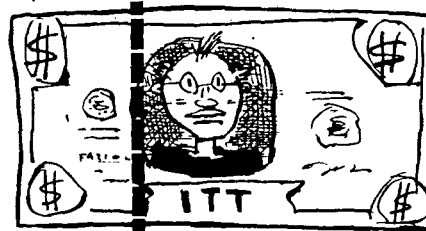
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## Now is the time to come to the aid of a free press

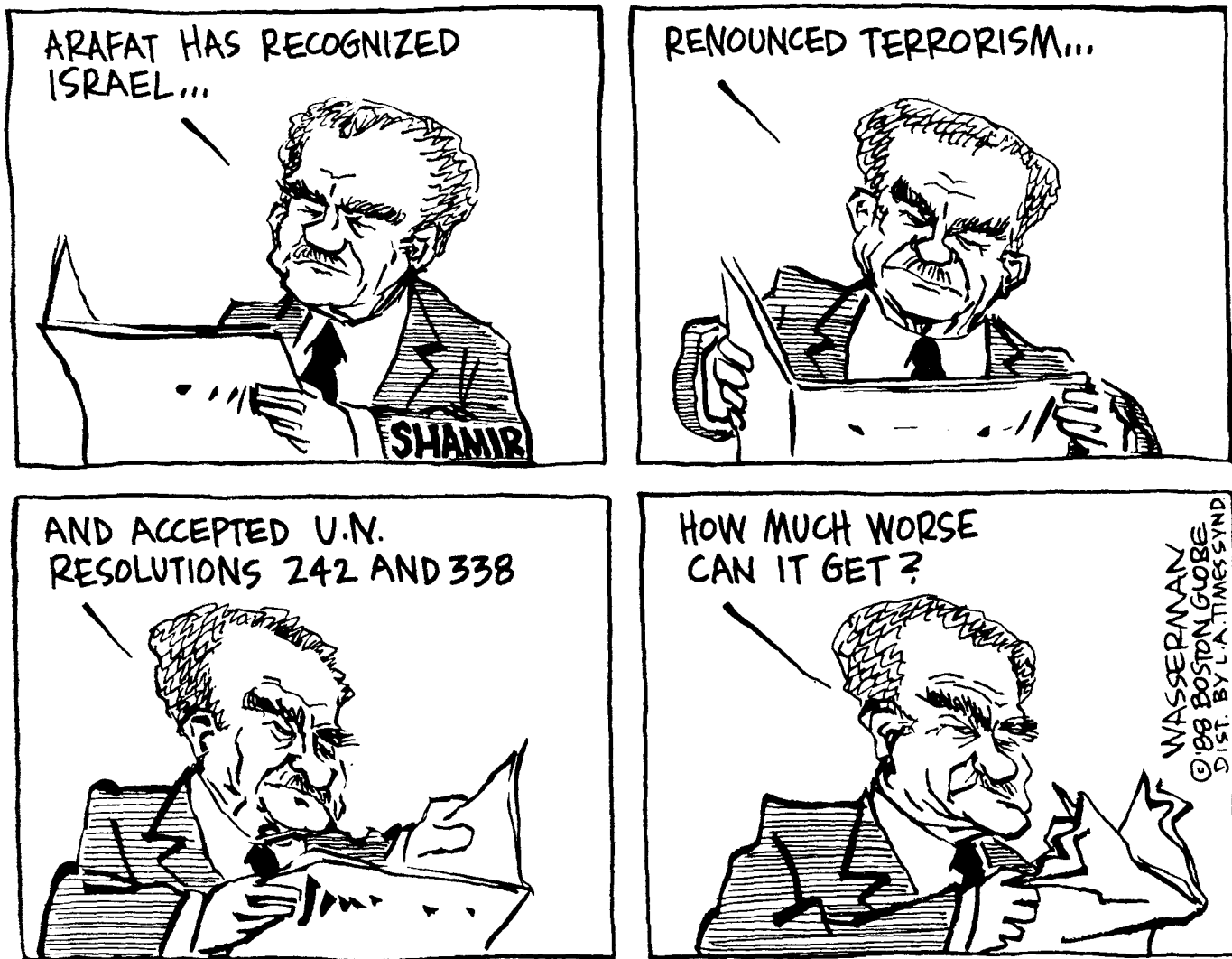
Last week, contributions to our \$150,000 fund drive dropped down to \$2,034, compared to \$5,760 the previous week. Our total so far of only \$44,894.76 is less than a third of what we will need to make it through this year without cuts in our coverage. While it’s clear that we won’t make our goal with this appeal, we are hoping to increase contributions substantially in the next few weeks. So please, if you have been planning to send us a contribution, do so now—and make it as much as you can afford. Send your check to: *In These Times*, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave, Chicago, Ill. 60647.

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By Hillel Schenker

**T**HE CRUCIAL MEETING THAT LED TO THE downfall of the current Israeli government in mid-March resembled a scene from a medieval passion play. The meeting was held in the ultra-orthodox suburban town of Bnei-Brak, not far from Tel Aviv, at the home of Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef. A former chief rabbi of Israel, Yosef is the spiritual leader of the ultra-orthodox Shas Party that represents the orthodox Sephardic (Eastern or Oriental) Jews in the Knesset, or parliament.

The Shas Party's six votes would have given Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir the crucial support needed to survive the no-confidence motion made against his Likud-led government by the Labor Party and its left-wing allies March 15.

But Yosef and the rising young star of the party, 34-year-old Arie D'eri, who has served as minister of the interior for the past two years, are both known as political doves. Yosef has frequently stated that human life is more important than land, and he and D'eri have called for territorial compromise and talks with representative Palestinians to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Shamir has not been so inspired.

At the root of Shamir's muddle is his inability to move forward with a proposed first step toward eventual Israeli-Palestinian negotiations: plans for elections of Palestinian representatives in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In fact, Shamir and his foreign minister, Moshe Arens, were adamantly opposed to the election idea—nominally known as the Shamir Plan—only two years ago.

In the spring of 1989, however, as the Palestinian *intifada* entered its second year, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) declared its recognition of the state of Israel, renounced terrorism and claimed its readiness to enter into negotiations with the Israeli government. In the wake of the revised

## Israeli Labor Party gets another shot at peace

PLO stance, President George Bush recommended that Shamir come forward with his own peace initiative if he wanted his next visit to Washington to be a productive one.

Shamir got the message. When he next visited the U.S. in the spring of 1989, he arrived with an election proposal in his briefcase. Some say the plan was hatched at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, while others say Labor's Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin deserves the credit.

Initially some government officials wondered whether Shamir genuinely believed in his plan or whether he was merely proposing a delaying tactic. Encouraging the latter view was the fact that the details of the plan—the election modalities—were left to be "fleshed out" in future discussions between the parties concerned. Presumably Shamir believed the plan would shatter on the bedrock of disagreement over details.

**A plethora of pundits:** A parade of election formulas soon materialized: (Egyptian President Hosni) "Mubarak's Ten Points," "The Labor Party Conditions" and "Minister Sharon and Company's Constraints." The last plan to be placed on the political table—known as (U.S. Secretary of State James) "Baker's Five Points"—suggests that one or two exiled Palestinians and one or two Palestinians with homes in both East Jerusalem and the West Bank be allowed to participate in a proposed Palestinian delegation. The group will meet with an Israeli delegation in Cairo to discuss the modalities of elections in the Occupied Territories as soon as an election plan is agreed upon. This formula was proposed as a compromise to satisfy the Palestin-

ian desire for a delegation representative of all Palestinians—not only those living in the Occupied Territories—as well as the Israeli desire to avoid direct communication with official PLO representatives.

The Labor Party, the Egyptians and the PLO all accepted these conditions—the only missing link was Prime Minister Shamir. While it was rumored that he was ready to accept the Baker formula, Minister Sharon, leader of the Likud-hawks, resigned from the government and declared that he would do everything possible—including challenging Shamir for the Likud Party leadership—to prevent the Cairo meeting. Although Shamir didn't flinch when confronted by Sharon at

**Shamir either couldn't approve the formula for the Baker plan due to a lack of political courage or wouldn't approve it because a meeting between Israeli and Palestinian delegations could potentially lead to territorial compromise.**

the Likud Central Committee meeting showdown, he did hesitate when it came to accepting the Baker plan.

**He who hesitates:** Shamir's hesitation may have cost him the prime ministership, as well as his political career. Some of his closest associates, including Foreign Minister Arens and junior ministers Den Meridor and Ehud Olmert, reportedly urged him to accept the plan. They apparently would like to see Likud converted into the pragmatist-centrist party of Israel—an Israeli version of the U.S. Bush-Baker Republican Party. They appreciate Israel's need to maintain its "special relationship" with the U.S., which requires responsiveness to American ideas, and understand the inevitability that Israel will eventually have to negotiate with Palestinian representatives.

Shamir either couldn't approve the formula for the Baker plan due to a lack of political courage or wouldn't approve it because a meeting between Israeli and Palestinian delegations could potentially lead to territorial compromise and, ultimately, to the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel. Both are anathema to Shamir, a staunch believer in a "Greater Israel."

Shamir's hesitation also gave Peres the opportunity to declare that Shamir was anti-peace, and that only a government led by the Labor Party could promote the election plan as a first step toward political resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

**Back to the Shas:** Peres' declaration set the stage for the meetings that took place at Rabbi Yosef's house in Bnei-Brak. His Shas Party is the largest of the four religious parties that hold the balance of power between Likud and Labor. All major leaders of both parties were gathered in his parlor—a contemporary Israeli version of a Bedouin tent. "If you accept the Baker plan," said Yosef to Shamir, "we will support the Likud against the vote of no confidence."

But Shamir remained ambivalent, and the government fell by a vote of 60 to 55 with five abstentions—all from the Shas Party.

To the uninitiated, Israeli politics frequently resembles an exercise in byzantine incomprehensibility. Fifteen different parties have seats in the Knesset, and the so-called "national unity" government, which has functioned—many would say dysfunctioned—for the past six years, is flanked by eight opposition members of Knesset on the right and 16 opposition members on the left.

Israeli President Chaim Herzog, himself a member of the Labor Party, officially called upon Peres on March 20 to attempt to form an alternative coalition that includes a majority of at least 61 out of the 120 Knesset members within the 21 days allotted by Israeli law. Theoretically, Peres has the support of the left-wing secular parties—Citizens Rights, Mapam and Shinui—and the three moderate orthodox parties—Shas, Agudat Yisrael and Degel Ha'Torah.

This is probably Peres' last chance to return to the prime minister's office and also may be the last chance to instigate a peace process based upon the Baker plan. Meanwhile, as much of the rest of the world undergoes extraordinary transformation, the Israelis and the Palestinians remain locked in a dangerous impasse. □

Hillel Schenker, senior editor of *New Outlook* in Tel Aviv, is currently serving as the magazine's American representative.

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By Joel Bleifuss

## Republican International, III

Imperialism now has a party name. In the past year the Republican Party has all but locked its hold on what are becoming the U.S. surrogate states of El Salvador, Honduras, Panama, Costa Rica, Guatemala and, most recently, Nicaragua. Last week "In Short" examined the key role the National Republican Institute for International Affairs played in undermining the democratic traditions of Costa Rica's 100-year-old democracy. Hundreds of thousands of Republican Institute dollars helped elect Rafael Calderón, a former institute employee, as the new president of Costa Rica. The Republican Institute is one of the National Endowment for Democracy's (NED) four "core grantees," the other three being the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, the AFL-CIO's Free Trade Union Institute and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Center for International Private Enterprise. The NED, founded in 1983, is funded by Congress. Last year it received \$15.8 million. *Common Cause Magazine's* Vicki Kemper reports that since 1984 the NED president has been Carl Gershman, the former director of the right-wing Social Democrats USA and an aide to former U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick. Gershman told Kemper that although the Democratic Institute mainly supports non-partisan projects, the Republican Institute primarily gives money to conservative groups connected to like-minded political parties. (In the case of Nicaragua, the Republican and Democratic institutes both supported the National Opposition Union.) In 1988 the Republican Institute channeled 90 percent of its funding to right-wing groups in Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Reagan legacy:** The Republican Institute, which is controlled by the Reagan wing of the Republican Party, originally defined itself as "a conservative political organization." But in early 1989 it was redefined as "an educational foundation ... a moderate foundation." One board member of this moderate foundation is presidential son Jeb Bush. Last October he wrote a letter to the editor of the *Miami Herald* defending the Republican Institute's operation in Costa Rica from a well-deserved slam by a *Herald* editorial. Bush, who apparently inherited an ability to twist the truth, stated: "Our great program, while generally associated with the opposition Social Christian Party, does nothing to support the party's political operations. It supports legislative research, training programs and seminars on center-right philosophy and policy." The "center-right philosophy and policy" that the Republican Institute supports is embodied in Salvadoran President Alfredo Cristiani and other Central American oligarchs. Republican Institute President Keith Schuette elaborated on the Republican Party's plan for the Americas in an interview with a Washington journalist who asked not to be named. When questioned about the wisdom of supporting ARENA, the party that spawned the Salvadoran death squads, Schuette answered: "Well, I wouldn't go around calling D'Aubuisson a murderer, but there came a time when conservative businessmen got tired of seeing their party tied to death squads and decided to get off their duffs and do something about it. So we're working all over Latin America to help these men, to build a Cristiani generation." That generation is being cultivated by Central American Training Academies, Republican Institute schools that extend political training and indoctrination to right-wing political activists. To gauge the pedagogical standards of that education, one need only look at the National Republican Institute's Advisory Council members: former U.N. Ambassador Kirkpatrick, former National Security Adviser Richard Allen and former Bush campaign director and current Republican National Committee Chairman Lee Atwater.

**Ailesing democracy:** Where the National Republican Institute goes, Roger Ailes apparently follows. Rafael Calderón was elected with the help of Republican media wizard Ailes, the creator of the infamous Willie Horton anti-Dukakis campaign. A February 5 press release obtained by *In These Times* brags that "Ailes Communications, Inc., scored its first international presidential victory yesterday with the election of Rafael A. Calderón Jr. 'We are extremely proud to have been a part of this history-making election in Costa Rica,' said ACI President Roger Ailes." The press release goes on to quote Calderón campaign manager Rodolfo Mendez as saying "Roger and his top people provided us with invaluable guidance, helping devise a winning strategy and execute it." Costa Rica-based journalist Tony Avirgan had this to say about Ailes' shifting the remaining work to Mexico. The conglomerate has refused to consider a buyout offer by a local investor group.

## Chicago proposal would save jobs, oust plunderers

CHICAGO—What can a city do when a corporate plunderer milks a local company dry then plans to shut it down and move the work out of town? Usually not much except beg or bribe the owners to stay.

But Chicago Ald. Bernard Hansen, encouraged by a community-labor coalition against factory shutdowns, has proposed a measure that would allow the city to use its powers of eminent domain to buy and transfer viable businesses to a new private owner in cases of socially irresponsible takeovers.

The ordinance would authorize the city to act against an owner who within the past five years has acquired a viable business employing at least 100 workers, if that owner has failed to make significant new investment and intends to close the plant despite a serious offer to buy.

The proposal sprung from a fight to keep open the Stewart Warner manufacturing plant, bought in 1987 by the British conglomerate BTR (see *In These Times*, Jan. 24). Despite promises to keep the plant open, BTR failed to invest in its new acquisition and steadily cut employment from 1,700 to 700. Then last November BTR announced it was

shifting the remaining work to Mexico. The conglomerate has refused to consider a buyout offer by a local investor group.

Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley and business establishment groups oppose the proposed ordinance, but it has strong support from the Chicago Association of Neighborhood Development Organizations (CANDO), a coalition of community-business groups that have fought, with some success, the forces that have cost Chicago one-third of its manufacturing jobs since 1979.

The city could probably use its power of eminent domain without the new law, says Douglass Cassel Jr., general counsel of Business and Professional People for the Public Interest, who drafted the ordinance. But, he says, passage of the measure is important because it would clarify the public purpose and procedures.

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled in several cases that governments can use eminent domain to transfer private property from one owner to another when it serves a clear public purpose. In upholding Wisconsin and Indiana anti-takeover laws, Cassel adds, the Supreme Court made it clear that legislation like the Chicago proposal is not considered an unconstitutional regulation of interstate commerce.

By setting narrow conditions on when the powers could be used, the

measure should not "chill" the business climate for owners of existing or start-up businesses, or for any buyer who legitimately wants to strengthen a business. The city would not own or manage any business but would simply use its powers to transfer the property. Some business owners, however, fear it might mean they couldn't sell out for the maximum potential price.

Despite the great potential for creative intervention in the local economy, few communities have used the historic powers of eminent domain—the right of governments to buy private property for public use—to fight irresponsible corporate owners. The city of New Bedford, Mass., successfully used the threat of eminent domain in the early '80s to force the conglomerate Gulf + Western to sell Morse Cutting Tool to a new owner rather than shut it down. The state of Pennsylvania has also granted the power of eminent domain to the Steel Valley Authority, a public agency established by several Pittsburgh-area communities over the past decade, to counter plant closings.

But the small opening provided by the new federal plant-closing notification act may encourage communities to use that window of opportunity for the kind of action proposed in Chicago.

—David Moberg



Bernie Sanders, the former four-term mayor of Burlington, Vt., is looking to become the first socialist in Congress in more than 50 years.

## Bernie Sanders sets sights on a seat in the House

BURLINGTON, VT.—Socialists are on the defensive in a lot of places these days, but not in contrarian Vermont.

Here the morning line gives Bernie Sanders an even chance of capturing the state's lone seat in the U.S. House. At a packed press conference March

19, the socialist former mayor of Burlington announced his plans for a return engagement against first-term Republican Rep. Peter Smith.

In 1988, Sanders came quite close to winning a three-way race for the same office. He picked up nearly 38 percent of the statewide vote, trailing Smith by four points but besting the Democratic candidate by a 2-to-1 margin.

This time, Sanders could have a

virtually unobstructed shot at Smith. Acknowledging that they have no hope of outpolling the charismatic maverick, leading Vermont Democrats are refusing to make the race. Only a little-known professor at the University of Vermont is said to be mulling a petition drive to gain the Democratic nomination.

Many of the party's top liberals, including Sen. Patrick Leahy, meanwhile, say they might even endorse



Sanders, provided he stops dumping on Democrats.

But the 48-year-old Brooklyn-born radical shows no sign of abandoning his third-party advocacy, or of revising his anti-capitalist analysis.

Sanders' candidacy will instead serve to promote the plans of independent activists who are in the process of forming a new left-wing party in Vermont. About half a dozen members of the state's Rainbow Coalition and Burlington's Progressive Coalition will probably try to ride Sanders' coattails in state legislative races this year. Although these insurgents will be campaigning as independents, their clear intention is to replicate on a statewide basis the third-party movement that over the past decade regularly defeated Democrats and Republicans in Burlington.

Similarly, Sanders remains an unapologetic proponent of Debsian-style socialism. While continuing to defend the Sandinista revolution, he now points to Sweden as a model for the kind of society he hopes to build in the U.S. "You hear a lot about Sweden's imperfections," Sanders says. "But let's hear also about its achievements—like an unemploy-

ment rate that's close to zero and an education system that enables kids to go to college without paying. I'd be satisfied with a socialism in the U.S. that made those kinds of achievements, for starters."

In announcing his House bid last week, the former four-term mayor stressed the need for fundamental changes in the nation's priorities. He called for creation of a national health-insurance program, a 50 percent cut in Pentagon spending over the next five years and an end to all U.S. military intervention.

Local pundits are divided over Sanders' prospects of unseating Smith. Some say the advantage of incumbency will be impossible to overcome, especially since Smith has been careful to craft a moderately liberal voting record. The 42-year-old inheritor of a banking fortune has fought well-publicized battles against the gun lobby while also gaining the endorsement of the League of Conservation Voters.

Other analysts argue that Smith, who lagged 10 points behind George Bush on the 1988 Republican ticket in Vermont, is perhaps the single most vulnerable congressional incumbent. Due in part to his preppy

style, Smith has never been able to build a solid electoral base in this still-flinty state, despite having run for office several times. In addition, it is thought that Smith's patrician manner will play particularly poorly as Vermont slides into a recession.

For his part, Sanders has moved well beyond the stage of running symbolic or "educational" campaigns. Mainly on the strength of his eight-year record in Burlington's City Hall, Sanders was able to raise over \$300,000 for his 1988 House race. He also assembled an impressive grass-roots vote-pulling operation that enabled him to finish first in five of the state's 14 counties.

In fact, Sanders would have become the first independent socialist elected to Congress in more than 50 years had he merely run even with Smith in Vermont's southern tier. The overall outcome will once again hinge on the results from that part of the state, which lies outside the range of Burlington-based media. If Sanders is able to purchase large chunks of airtime in the comparatively expensive southern Vermont market, he could be laying siege to Capitol Hill this time next year.

—Kevin J. Kelley

## Homeless seize some rooms of their own

Homeless people across the country want to make sure that U.S. Housing Secretary Jack Kemp is a man of his word. That's why they began occupying and rehabilitating vacant federally owned housing developments earlier this month in a number of major U.S. cities.

"This is not an action," said Nathaniel Thomas, vice president of the Detroit chapter of the Union of the Homeless, after taking over two U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) single-family homes in East Detroit. "This is an ongoing campaign which will continue until Jack Kemp keeps his promise to give 10 percent of [HUD's] single-family properties to the homeless." Kemp made that promise last October 6.

The occupations began on March 5 in Detroit, Philadelphia and Alexandria, Va., and a full-blown national campaign is scheduled to begin May 1. When New York's homeless tried to join the March 5 occupations, police blocked their entry. Alexandria police arrested homeless activists inside a HUD apartment building March 6, but no arrests or convictions have been made in Philadelphia or Detroit.

Detroit Mayor Coleman Young met with the union on March 9 and agreed to send a staff member to examine a model homeless housing project in Philadelphia. The mayor called the meeting a good basis for a continuing relationship with the union and pledged to begin a pilot homeless housing program in Detroit. Young said he would provide

the union with homes from the city's vacant single-family housing stock upon the successful rehabilitation and use of the buildings the homeless activists had already seized.

In Philadelphia, a spokesman for Mayor W. Wilson Goode said his administration supports Union of Homeless efforts. The administration also helped found the union's sister organization, Dignity Housing. Dignity, a non-profit organization run by and for the homeless, currently houses 300 homeless men, women and children in former HUD homes that were purchased with financing from the city.

For the past few years, the Goode administration has sought housing solutions other than those offered by HUD. "Under [Jimmy] Carter, HUD [tried to] make homes available based on need. But during the Republican administration, housing has been treated as a commodity," said Philadelphia Housing Commissioner Ed Schwartz. "We don't see public housing as an entrepreneurial opportunity."

The Philadelphia chapter of the Union of Homeless first occupied HUD buildings in the summer of 1988. In subsequent negotiations with HUD, the union agreed to vacate the premises in exchange for housing vouchers for 200 homes. To date, HUD has delivered only 63 of them.

Schwartz, who helped negotiate the 1988 agreement between the HUD regional office and the activists, said, "We absolutely expect the fulfillment of HUD's pledge."

On March 16, Philadelphia HUD officials complained that bureaucratic restraints have kept them from honoring the full commitment but said they would seek Kemp's ap-

proval to expedite the remaining vouchers.

Dignity Housing offers its formerly homeless clients "life skills" training—how to budget food, money, time, etc.—employment training and job-placement services as well as an opportunity to get off the street. Union organizers say the program can be emulated in urban areas all over the country.

The group has informed HUD field offices on the East Coast that they intend to defend their acquisitions until HUD meets their demands, as follows:

- HUD must honor its commitment to allocate 10 percent of its available inventory for the homeless;

- HUD must make special Section 8 housing vouchers available for homeless individuals and families. The vouchers are redeemable by landlords for 70 percent of the monthly rental charge;

- HUD must provide resources for rehabilitating the above-mentioned properties; and

- HUD must admit homeless people to positions on boards and committees involved in development and management of homeless programs and allow homeless people to manage their own residences.

HUD and Bush administration officials refuse to comment on the campaign or to say whether or not entering federal properties to avoid freezing to death is a justifiable action. But it is doubtful that Washington will continue its hands-off approach to the confrontation indefinitely.

"This is just the beginning of a nationwide takeover," said New York Union of the Homeless leader Ronald Casanova. "May Day is just part of something that will be going on all summer long." —Matthew Reiss

successful foray into Central America: "People on Calderon's staff say Ailes was a gift from the Republicans. They also claim that his input was minimal, but certain characteristics of Calderon's campaign had the mark of Ailes' influence. For instance, this was Calderon's third try at the presidency. In the past he used a lot of right-wing rhetoric, but this time he was more like Bush—avoidance of one-on-one interviews, big on image, short on content, well-planned photo opportunities, speeches with no content but slogans." Welcome to American democracy. Persistent rumors have linked Ailes with the 1989 campaign of Salvador's Cristiani and his ARENA party, but Ailes Communications denies any such connection. There are also rumors that Ailes left his mark on Violeta Chamorro's recent win in Nicaragua. Said the Washington journalist, "Mainly what Ailes is good at is coaching people on how to change their personalities. His forte is body language. He probably taught Violeta to do what he taught Bush not to do. She did very well in her wheel chair, waving her arms." Apparently, Ailes' lack of fluency in Spanish didn't hinder him. His craft has little to do with the rational mind; it's the stuff medicine shows were made of. He told the computer-based news service Political Hotline, "I can turn the sound down on the TV and tell whether somebody's a successful communicator or not. I don't have to necessarily listen to the language. I am not fluent in Spanish. The manager and press guy speak fluent English. I don't have to know the language where they're fluent."

**Fanning fascist embers?** With a bulkhead of Republican "democracies" established in Central America, the Republican Institute is shifting its focus to Eastern Europe, where the time is ripe for a right-wing resurgence. The institute's current Eastern European activities are described in a report titled "Summary of Program Operations 1983-1990." Consider Bulgaria, for example. The institute summary says, "Programming in Bulgaria began in early 1990 with the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF). The UDF is a 12-member coalition of independent organizations in opposition to the Bulgarian Communist Party. Primary activity will focus on the development of a technical infrastructure for the United Democratic Forces and a nationwide training program in the workings of democracy." Republican Institute Program Director Margaret Thompson says that she expects about \$1 million in NED funds to be spent in Bulgaria in preparation for the June election. In Hungary, according to the summary, the Republicans plan to provide "continued infrastructure support for several center-right political parties, and the development of a long-range program of support for the civic basis for democracy." According to Thompson, the center-right political parties receiving infrastructural and training support will be the Democratic Forum and the two Small Holders parties. As for Romania, this past January Republican Institute agents went there on a "study mission" to investigate "programming opportunities to encourage democratic development." Thompson says that in Romania, where elections are set for May 20, the Republican Institute will be supporting the National Liberal Party and the National Peasant Party Christian Democrats. And, according to the summary, in Poland the institute "will seek to develop the political dialogue and position of the center-right in Polish politics." Further, Thompson says, the Republican Institute has programs planned for Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.

**Client states?** Like Central America, it appears that all working parts of the Republican behemoth will be called up for action in Eastern Europe. *Washington Times* columnist John Elvin reports, "Roger Ailes appears to be wading deeper into international political waters. He said he has had feelers from potential candidates in budding democracies in Eastern Europe." Greg Stevens of Ailes Communications, Inc., told *In These Times* that Ailes has talked to people in Eastern Europe but that he was not currently working for an Eastern European client. He then explained that some clients don't want their association with Ailes Communications made public, in which case the company denies involvement.

**Alive and Orwell:** In the most recent *Covert Action*, William Robinson and David MacMichael analyze the NED's anti-Sandinista campaign. The journalist and former CIA agent conclude their eight-page report this way: "U.S. actions toward Nicaragua have a strange and disturbing Orwellian character. Intervention is defined as non-intervention. Non-partisan bodies are made up of highly partisan figures. Those who champion democracy in Nicaragua have shown contempt for democracy in the rest of the world. This is the new covert action. Kinder, gentler and open to view—if you only know where to look and what to look for."





## U.S. automakers ride on rough terrain

By John B. Judis

DETROIT

**T**HE RECENT POPULARITY OF MICHAEL MOORE'S film, *Roger and Me*, underscores a depressing fact about the American automobile industry. Seventeen years after the energy crisis wreaked havoc on domestic car producers, the U.S. industry in general is still in disrepute and disrepair. Although Ford is in surprisingly good shape, General Motors and Chrysler are facing severe crises. According to John Womack, the research director of the international vehicle program of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the two companies "look more beleaguered than ever."

The main threat continues to be Japanese automakers. American producers continue to lose ground to Honda, Toyota, Nissan and Mazda. In the last decade the Japanese share of the American market rose from 20 to 28 percent. In 1989, for the first time ever, a foreign car, the Honda Accord, was the best-selling car in the U.S.

But in 1990 the Japanese threat to the Big Three carmakers comes largely from within rather than without. The Honda Accord is made in Marysville, Ohio. And Japanese factories in the U.S. now have the capacity to produce 2.5 million cars a year—in a market that can absorb only about 8.5 million new car sales annually. In the '90s, either American or Japanese automakers will have to cut back—or even fold.

At stake is more than simply a nameplate on a car or a headquarters address. As Moore's film dramatically shows, America's Big Three have long sustained cities and towns across the industrial heartland, and they have also coexisted, and sometimes even cooperated with, the socially progressive United Auto Workers (UAW). If the Big Three go, they will likely take the UAW and towns like Flint, Mich., with them.

**Robots going haywire:** General Motors' recent decline has been the most dramatic. In the '50s and '60s, GM controlled 60 percent

of the American car market, but by 1980 it had dropped to 45 percent. This year it controls only 34 percent. In 1987, it began to lose money on its North American car sales. In all, GM cut capacity in the U.S. by 16 percent during the '80s.

Contrary to what Moore suggests in *Roger and Me*, GM's problem over the last decade did not stem from using its profits to buy weapons producer Hughes Aircraft. GM spent \$77 billion on plant equipment and research during the '80s—more than any

### INDUSTRY

other foreign or domestic car company. By contrast, it spent only \$5 billion buying Hughes, and it was a purchase intended to enhance GM's car-making ability through the introduction of Hughes' high technology.

GM's problem, as brilliantly documented in Maryann Keller's book *Rude Awakening*, was that it tried to use technology to solve a problem that lay elsewhere. It thought it could mimic Japanese productivity gains by replacing workers with robots. The key to Japan's success, however, was not its technology but the way it organized production: its integration of engineering, design and marketing, and its use of team production and labor-management cooperation in continuously improving the manufacturing process.

In the '80s, GM was the last of the Big Three to adapt Japanese labor-management

**If the Big Three U.S. automakers go, they will likely take the UAW and towns like Flint, Mich., with them.**

techniques to its own factories. In its Van Nuys, Calif., plants, for instance, it introduced production teams as a way to increase competition, rather than cooperation, among workers. Its labor force remained the most discontented, as evidenced by the high proportion of GM workers in the UAW's dissident New Directions Caucus, which opposes labor-management cooperation.

GM opted instead for technological quick fixes. In Detroit's Poletown it spent \$600 million building a plant that recruited largely untrained workers to run largely untested automated equipment—260 robots for welding, 50 automated vehicles to carry parts around the plant, and hundreds of cameras and lasers to monitor the production process. The robots went haywire, and workers constantly found themselves having to undo the damage.

According to Detroit auto consultant James Harbour's recent survey of the auto industry, which was excerpted in the *Detroit Free Press*, Poletown had one of the least efficient plants in America. It used an average of 7.85 workers to produce each car—about twice as many as Ford or Japanese plants used.

GM did have an alternative model of production to turn to. When GM and Toyota opened the Fremont, Calif.-based New United Motor Manufacturing Inc. (NUMMI) plant in 1984, GM, following Toyota's lead, used '70s-era technology, but emphasized labor-management cooperation. Workers were organized into teams and were encouraged to exchange jobs and introduce improvements. Workers and management used the same parking lots and dining rooms, and labor-management committees from the UAW, GM and Toyota made important plant decisions. The NUMMI plant averaged only 3.73 workers to produce each car.

But GM modeled its other plants on Poletown rather than on NUMMI, and, like Poletown, they ranked as the least efficient among American factories last year. In Har-

bour's survey of productivity in 37 American plants, GM factories occupied the last 11 places.

**Bad decisions:** As it begins the new decade, Chrysler is now almost as financially strapped as it was in the late '70s. While it is not on the edge of bankruptcy, it shows little promise of achieving dividends for its stockholders or bonuses for its workers and managers. In the last quarter of 1989, Chrysler lost \$664 million—its first quarterly loss since the early '80s.

In the '80s, Chrysler made the kind of mistakes that Moore imputes to GM. While it had less money to spend than either Ford or GM, it threw it away on extraneous acquisitions while neglecting to improve its basic product. In the mid-80s, when it should have been designing a new car and the engine for the '90s, it spent its money buying two Italian luxury-car companies, Maserati and Lamborghini, as well as corporate aircraft producer Gulfstream, military electronics maker Electrospace and American Motors Company. It even spent \$1.6 billion buying up its own stock. Now faced with selling virtually the same style cars it has been producing since 1982, Chrysler is hurriedly selling off its acquisitions and closing its older plants so that it can finance a new model by 1992.

The only real American success story is Ford. During the '80s, Ford actually increased its market share from 22.8 to 24.1 percent, and last year its profits exceeded GM's for the first time in 70 years.

Ford benefited from the introduction in 1985 of the mid-size Taurus and Sable—cars whose aerodynamic styling helped Ford to dominate the lucrative mid-size market during the last half of the '80s. But Ford was successful also because it used its money wisely—it modernized old plants rather than building new ones—and it adopted new joint labor-management programs. Like Chrysler, Ford put factory working conditions under joint union-management control.

In Harbour's study of plant productivity, Ford's topped both its American and Japanese competitors. At its Atlanta, Ga., plant that produces Taurus and Sable, Ford uses 2.72 workers to produce each car. Ford's average of 3.25 workers a car was better than the 3.46-per-car average of the Japanese transplants. And with productivity came higher profits. In 1988, Ford made \$591 for each car it sold, compared to \$228 for Chrysler and \$47 for GM.

**Paying pensions:** In competing with the Japanese transplants, the Big Three did overcome what had been their most serious weakness. By the late '80s, Big Three cars coming off the assembly line had almost as few defects as Japanese cars. According to the authoritative survey of automobile quality done by J.D. Power & Associates, Los Angeles-based auto consultants, American cars occupied four of the top 10 slots in 1989. Since the firm began its surveys in 1985, the number of defects reported in American cars has dropped by nearly 40 percent.

But throughout the decade GM and Chrysler—and even Ford—continued to lose sales to Japanese competitors. This was both because of management mistakes and because the American firms labored under certain disadvantages. Japanese firms' design and engineering departments are better integrated and less bureaucratically hamstrung than those of American firms. As a result,

*Continued on page 10*



By Paul Bass

NEW HAVEN, CONN.

**W**HEN A BUSINESS GROUP HOSTS A CONFERENCE called "Beating Swords into Plowshares"—as the Chamber of Commerce here will this week—you know that a community has begun to talk seriously about disarmament.

In recent months economic conversion has become a hot topic in military-dependent states like Connecticut. Even veritable hawks acknowledge that weapons contractors will undergo severe diets during this decade, forcing them to find peaceful products to manufacture to replace those dwindling weapons contracts.

Connecticut, with its 500,000 or so military-related jobs, is a prime candidate for the diet doctor. More than 700 state firms

## DISARMAMENT

owe much of their business to the Defense Department, according to the governor's new 1990-91 economic report. In fiscal year 1988 the firms got \$4.9 billion in contracts, making Connecticut second in the country in per-capita prime contracts. And that's just prime contracts for major weapons builders. The builders, in turn, hire small subcontractors who employ hundreds of thousands of state workers.

"Innovation" is the current buzzword in contractor circles. At Stratford's Textron-Lycoming plant, where the nation's M-1 tank engines are assembled, workers have begun to discuss conversion for the first time. More than 300 of their co-workers were laid off recently. And the workforce faces up to an estimated 1,500 layoffs in coming years—not to mention another 1,100 layoffs projected for the company's suppliers and another 300 to 400 jobs in the community surrounding the plant.

The employee's union, the United Auto Workers—which nationally has pushed conversion policies since the '40s—has lobbied federal officials to save the M-1 tank. Union leaders also believe the government can save jobs at the plant by sending M-1 engines back here for overhauling rather than to plants elsewhere in the country. But sensing the odds against them, union members also have begun considering what other products their plant could generate.

"We're an engine manufacturer," says Joe Ciuci, Local 1010 president. "Most of our equipment is high tech that could readily be retooled to make engine parts for washing machines, trains, automobiles, earth-moving equipment—anything that moves."

The union recently joined forces with the Naugatuck Valley Project, a non-profit group that helps factory workers purchase plants or find other ways to avoid closings or mass layoffs. The group plans to urge both the company and public officials to find new markets.

**Diversify or else:** A few companies elsewhere in Connecticut have already found those markets on their own or with state help. The granddaddy of diversifying firms, Bloomfield-based Kaman Corporation, decided to wean itself of military dependence back in the early '60s. This move was prompted just days after John F. Kennedy's assassination, when newly installed President Lyndon Johnson shifted a major army helicopter contract from Kaman to Texas-based Bell.

In its first diversification project, Kaman used its knowledge of how rotor blades make

helicopters vibrate—how to create or avoid certain harmonics, for example—to invent the round-backed Ovation guitar. It has since lowered its military-related business from about 90 to 40 percent. With its current conversion project, it is developing new, more energy-efficient alternators and motors for industrial machines.

But diversification is expensive. Other military-dependent firms getting into the conversion act have received equity investment from the quasi-public Connecticut Innovations, Inc. (CII), which invests state money in technology-based companies that may not otherwise be able to afford to explore lucrative industrial commercial possibilities.

CII, for example, has invested \$800,000 in an effort by Dataproducts New England of Wallingford to market a Defense Department-commissioned computerized communication system for commercial use. If the marketing campaign succeeds, CII gets 5 percent of the royalties for the first five years and up to a 250 percent payback on its original investment.

"Much great research is done on behalf of the military. It has great commercialization potential," says CII Executive Director David Driver.

Yet since 1981 only six military-dependent firms have sought financial help from CII or its predecessor agency. One reason for the lack of interest, according to Driver, is that the CII program wasn't aggressively marketed in the past. To make up for lost time and to cash in on the new conversion awareness, CII is launching its first major outreach campaign in years.

**Federal rustling:** State legislators had seized on conversion even before "peace dividend" entered the American political lexicon this winter. Last year U.S. Rep. Sam Gejdenson (D-CT) introduced the Economic Diversification and Defense Adjustment Act, which called for establishing local commit-

tees—with labor, business, government, educational and non-profit-group representatives—that would have received federal money for retraining workers and planning new uses for military-dependent factories. The bill also would have paid health-insurance premiums for workers laid off due to plant closings or military contract losses.

Although Gejdenson's bill didn't get far last session, this year it might, thanks to the

## Weapons contractors will undergo severe diets in the '90s, forcing them to find peaceful products to manufacture to replace those dwindling weapons contracts.

interest of House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-MO). He asked Gejdenson and other conversion advocates to draw up a new version of the bill to be introduced this spring. With Gephardt's name at the top, the bill has a good chance of passing, predicts Gejdenson, whose district includes Groton's Electric Boat shipyard, maker of Trident nuclear subs. "Nationally, if we're going to make rational decisions and not abandon communities that with their sweat and toil supported our defense, we have to do something," he says.

Meanwhile, fellow U.S. Rep. Nancy Johnson (R-CT) introduced legislation in February aimed at the "little guys," the small subcontractors or sub-subcontractors that will have more trouble than their mammoth counterparts in converting to non-military production. Unlike multinationals, they often lack the cash flow to afford the research, marketing or retraining that conversion re-

quires. Johnson's bill would offer tax breaks to small manufacturers of bearings, semi-conductors or optics that invest in retooling and capital improvements.

At least one aspiring Connecticut-based Congress member is also making the conversion pitch. Third District Democratic candidate Rosa DeLauro recently called for reserving 10 percent of all hypothetical federal peace-dividend dollars to support local and state conversion planning committees.

**Momentum in Hartford:** Connecticut formed its planning committee in February, and Gejdenson and Democratic state Sen. John Larson are now seeking corporate and union leaders who will share current information on conversion efforts to serve on it. Another state bill would give military-reliant companies up to \$50,000 in tax credits each year to study developing non-military-related products.

Veteran conversion advocates like Rev. Kevin Bean, who in recent years has been the state's most visible apostle, want to see the state legislature go further faster. Bean, along with Fairfield University professor Kevin Cassidy, state United Auto Workers leader Tom Colapietro and state Machinists leader Bill Rudis, has drawn up the following recommendations for additions to state conversion legislation:

- Authorize CII to work directly with local unions or cities where military contractors won't develop product diversification plans on their own;

- Give military-dependent corporations up to 25 percent tax credits for money spent on job retraining or diversification;

- Increase CII's staff to undertake its own specific product-diversification planning, including "sectoral strategic planning," in which an industry is completely analyzed, from the huge prime contractors to the smallest subcontracting machine shop, in the hope of discovering new potential markets; and

- Offer state "challenge grants" to companies to follow up on new potential products unearthed by such analyses.

Based on their recent experience, Bean and Cassidy are frustrated by state legislators' conversion pace. They specifically criticize the task force's chairman, Democratic state Sen. Thomas Sullivan, for failing to translate any of the subcommittee's efforts in recent years into a single bill. Sullivan responds that although he didn't grasp the immediacy of the issue "when it first came up two and a half years ago," he "absolutely does now."

Whatever the past level of awareness, current sentiment toward some form of conversion action cuts across both aisles at the legislature. Republican state Rep. J. Vincent Chase says he'd even support increased state spending on the issue, despite the out-of-control state deficit that otherwise has member of both parties demanding budget cutbacks. "If these companies go under or lay off more people," he predicts, "we're in for a worse fix."

You don't have to tell that to Bean, who beginning in the late '70s repeatedly warned that companies would one day be forced to convert. Asked whether he feels vindicated, Bean answers, "I just feel this issue is now meat and potatoes on everyone's platter."

The challenge is to keep the meat and potatoes—or some type of nourishment—on as many platters as possible. □

**Paul Bass** is a reporter for the *New Haven Advocate*, where a version of this story originally appeared.



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# Connecticut takes on the conversion challenge



# Illinois voters prefer Savage tactics

By Salim Muwakkil

CHICAGO

**R**EP. GUS SAVAGE (D-IL) DEFEATED AN AFRICAN-American opponent in the March 20 primary here, but in his victory speech the five-term congressman charged that "white racism" was the real loser.

Speaking to a crowd of his supporters at the South Side nightclub that served as his campaign's election headquarters, the 64-year-old Savage excoriated the white-owned media and vowed to continue his controversial ways. Savage was flanked by several members of the Nation of Islam's (NOI) security force as he delivered his blistering speech, and NOI's leader Louis Farrakhan was singled out for special thanks.

He said defeating "dumb-dumb" (Chicago Mayor Richard M.) Daley is the highest item on his political agenda. "If we could emerge victorious after all they tried to throw at us, then it's clear that this movement for black empowerment can't be stopped," Savage declared.

Many thought this election would finally stop him. The feisty politician has been labeled everything from a buffoon to a dangerous racial demagogue, and he is accorded little respect in the mainstream media. He has a talent for stoking controversy and is frequently embroiled in embarrassing circumstances, the latest being charges that he sexually harassed a female Peace Corps volunteer during a trip to Zaire.

But despite the steady barrage of negative coverage—perhaps because of it—Savage continues to prevail in the polling booth. He won this contest by a 52 percent to 43 percent margin. Most commentators credit that success to Savage's well-honed ability to manipulate his constituents' frustrations.

**Pure race-baiting:** "Savage's re-election should be very encouraging to [Washington,

D.C. Mayor] Marion Barry," said Clarence Page, the sole black member of the *Chicago Tribune's* editorial board and a Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist. Page said that Savage, like Barry—who faces drug charges as he campaigns for re-election—successfully diverts attention from his performance in office by blaming all of his problems on the white establishment.

"Savage's lone tactic is race-baiting, pure

## BLACK POLITICS

and simple," said Nate Clay, editor of the *Chicago Metro News*, a black-owned weekly. "He is a walking embarrassment—not only to the constituents of his district but to black Americans in general." Clay, however, is one of the few movement veterans who oppose Savage. Most of Chicago's movement leadership is solidly behind the controversial congressman, and his support is even stronger in activist circles across the U.S.

In addition to his movement advocates, Savage's labor support is virtually unanimous. Americans for Democratic Action rate his vote record at almost 100 percent.

"A lot of people look to Gus as one of the most principled members of the Congressional Black Caucus," said Rev. Herbert Daughtry, a Brooklyn-based organizer with a long history in the civil-rights struggle. "He has spoken out strongly on issues like the bombing of Libya, the Israeli-South African connection and the invasion of Panama, when others were curiously silent."

But Savage, who was first elected in 1980, is also part of the old-line black leadership that some analysts predict will soon be eclipsed by a new breed of "crossover" politicians. In fact, Savage's vanquished opponent, Mel Reynolds, epitomizes that new breed. Conciliatory and pragmatic where Savage is confrontational and bombastic, the articu-

late Reynolds appeals to middle-class blacks and comforts wary whites.

**A sterling resume:** Even more, Reynolds' personal history is both a mythic tale of social transformation and a peculiarly American story of racial triumph. Born in 1952 to an impoverished family in Mississippi, where he spent his early years picking cotton, Reynolds rose to become in 1975 the first black Rhodes scholar from Illinois. His remarkable journey from a Mississippi cottonfield to Oxford University covered as much cultural distance as it did geographical and speaks well of Reynolds' various talents.

After leaving Oxford, Reynolds got involved in the short-lived 1980 presidential campaign of Sen. Edward Kennedy. In 1983 he hooked up with Jesse Jackson and served as the candidate's traveling assistant throughout his maiden 1984 campaign. In 1986 he created a program—entitled Amer-

## The feisty politician has been labeled everything from a buffoon to a dangerous racial demagogue.

ican Scholars for World Hunger—that was designed to enlist black American college students to travel to East Africa and lend assistance to those in refugee camps suffering the effects of cyclical famines. The program, however, was halted by the Sudanese civil war.

This is Reynolds' second run for Savage's seat. He challenged the congressman in the 1988 primary and came in third in a five-way race. Until this year's primary, in fact, Savage had never been challenged by a major can-

didate in a one-on-one primary contest.

Reynolds' sterling resume and Savage's increasing bombast—when questioned about the alleged incident in Zaire, he often responded by denouncing reporters with epithets like "faggot," "sissy" and, apparently his personal favorite, "white racist mother-fucker"—seemed to add up to an equation that weighed heavily in favor of the young challenger. So there's little wonder why many Savage opponents thought they spotted light at the end of a 10-year tunnel.

**"Outside" influence:** Yet some activists say that light was merely the glow of sellout gold. "Mel Reynolds and these other so-called crossover politicians are very dangerous," said Robert Starks, a political-science professor at Northeastern University's Center for Inner-City Studies and chairman of the Task Force for Black Political Empowerment. "They're just too young to understand the stakes. You can't get most of your funding from an outside source and then claim to serve the interest of the community at the same time."

The bone of contention for Starks and other organizers was Reynolds' relationship with Robert Asher, the national chairman of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), who was the major donor to the Reynolds campaign during its latter stages. When the issue of AIPAC's funding was first raised in a column by *Chicago Sun-Times* writer and editorial board member Vernon Jarrett—a solid Savage supporter—critics complained that anti-Semitism had once again raised its ugly head in Chicago's black community.

The *Metro News'* Clay said Jarrett's charges were a "frenzied attempt to smear Reynolds and save Savage." He countered that Savage also has received contributions from Jewish interests: "If, by helping Reynolds, Asher was part of some great conspiracy to control the black community, why isn't the same true about Savage's Jewish friends and financial backers?"

Thus Clay undermined his own charge that

By David Moberg

CHICAGO

**F**OR MANY DECADES ILLINOIS POLITICS WAS comfortably defined by a strong, classic big-city Democratic machine in Chicago and a rural downstate that is largely Republican. During the past decade, however, the old verities have crumbled and a chaotic jumble of shifting allegiances have taken their place.

Last week's primaries confirmed that Chicago's fabled machine has been reduced to a few white ethnic neighborhoods, and that even within its ranks there is dissension and defection. But the black-led, interracial reform forged in the '80s by the late Mayor Harold Washington to smash the old machine is in at least equal disarray.

If any political force is gaining, it's the power of money (and television) in the form of an ad hoc alliance of developers, lawyers and related business people. This "new machine," as local political strategist Don Rose calls it, has adopted Washington's good-government reform policies but largely neglects blacks and does not share the late mayor's visions of strong citizen participation and a diverse, neighborhood-oriented economy.

The Republicans have lost ground downstate as a result of the decade-long travails of the farm economy and smaller city manufacturing and now find their main political

# Money and dissension jam fabled machine

base in the booming suburban counties surrounding Chicago. That same base is deeply split, in this case between conservatives and moderates, over taxes and abortion. And not unlike their Democratic counterparts, Chicago's Republican leaders now face charges of bossism, patronage politics and corruption.

Four years ago Republicans won their only major Cook County office when James O'Grady, an ex-Democrat and former

## CHICAGO

Chicago police superintendent, ousted a Democrat accused of wholesale patronage abuses in the race for sheriff. Now O'Grady has been accused of the same shenanigans. In a tape recently made public, a leading mobster told an FBI informant that he'd paid off O'Grady and his deputy, James Dvorak, head of the Cook County Republican Party.

**Stealing fire:** When Washington died in 1987, the reform coalition, which had been patched together only with his political skill and personal magnetism, died with him.

Blacks split, largely on reform and machine lines. Even many of the more reform-minded blacks subsequently ignored and discounted the fragile alliances Washington had knit with Hispanics and liberal whites. As a result, Richard M. Daley was able to win last year's mayoral election, using the rhetoric of reform to pick off enough independent whites and Hispanics while banking on a conservative white constituency hostile to blacks.

Last fall Cook County Democrats splintered as they attempted to devise a slate of candidates for county offices. But when disaffected blacks—along with liberal whites and Hispanics—tried to create a "progressive" alternative slate, some blacks adamantly rejected supporting Alderman David Orr, a leading white ally of Washington, in his campaign for Cook County Board president. They insulted and abused blacks and others who supported Orr over black state Appellate Court Judge R. Eugene Pincham.

Pincham faced millionaire corporate attorney Richard Phelan, a local political unknown despite his national prominence as chief investigator of U.S. Speaker Jim

Wright's ethics. Also running against Pincham were County Clerk Stanley Kuser, a machine veteran disliked by Democratic Party Chairman George Dunne; and lackluster, little-known state Sen. Ted Lechowicz, the candidate slated by "regular" Democrats after Dunne stunned everyone with a last-minute decision to step down after 21 years as head of the nation's second-largest county government.

Although Daley remained neutral to avoid potentially harmful controversy, his monied supporters flocked to Phelan, who advanced a broad program of reform on the long-neglected issues of health care and criminal justice. The candidates largely agreed on many issues—only Lechowicz opposed reinstating abortions at Cook County Hospital. But Lechowicz was a wooden campaigner and Kuser was dogged by repeated charges of malfeasance in office. Phelan spent a record-breaking \$2 million—half of it on TV—several times the total raised by all of his opponents together.

Pincham attacked Phelan for belonging to discriminatory country clubs and for insisting on maintaining his lucrative law practice while in office. But Pincham failed to mobilize a strong black movement or win many non-black supporters, some of whom knew him only for a remark during a 1987 speech that any African-American who didn't support Washington "ought to be hung."

Some voters, especially women, reacted





Feisty Illinois Rep. Gus Savage (right) chalked up his second victory over the more conciliatory Mel Reynolds in last week's Democratic primary.

Savage supporters exploited anti-Semitism to fuel his campaign. It wasn't Reynolds' acceptance of "Jewish" money that so upset Savage supporters; it was that the money came from a lobbying group well known for its dogged dedication to Israel's interests. "Funds from the 'outside' can be expected and accepted, but when nearly all of a candidate's funds are from 'outside,' something smells," wrote Jarrett.

"Knowing AIPAC's history as a militant advocate for Israel," said Starks, "it seemed clear to us that AIPAC was supporting Reynolds because they thought he could best benefit Israel's interests. And with Israel on record as being a major contributor to South Africa's ballistic-missile and nuclear

technology—not to mention its treatment of Palestinians—we found it hard to understand how a candidate seeking to represent a predominantly African-American district could accept money from such a pro-Israeli group."

But Savage also used the AIPAC funding issue to stoke some latent anti-Jewish sentiments that undoubtedly exist in some segments of the black-activist community. During a rally late in the campaign at Operation PUSH headquarters, Savage read the names of Reynolds' contributors and dramatically emphasized names of the predominantly Jewish suburbs in which many of them lived.

The charge of Jewish manipulation has a particular resonance for many black organiz-

ers weaned during the turbulent days of the '60s. Much of the turmoil that beset organizations like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was centered around black resentments about the disproportionate Jewish influence in that civil-rights groups.

**The crossover myth:** But aside from the differences over funding sources and other particular details of the campaign, the race for Illinois' 2nd congressional seat was significant in a wider political context. "I don't see it in the context of a new breed of conciliatory crossover candidate against the old-time, civil rights-styled candidate," explained Cheryl Miller, a senior research as-

sociate and visiting scholar at the Joint Center for Political Studies, a think tank specializing on black issues. "Instead I see it simply as a maturation process that is taking place in the African-American community."

Miller compared the Savage-Reynolds confrontation to last year's mayoral races in Detroit and Cleveland, where the leading candidates were both black and thus had to adopt strategies to draw sharp distinctions between themselves. In Detroit, longtime incumbent Mayor Coleman Young adopted a stridently pro-black strategy that proved victorious over the more conciliatory challenger Tom Barrow. In Cleveland, however, the win went to Ohio state Sen. Michael White, whose conciliatory campaign contrasted sharply with the racially aggressive campaign of City Council President George Forbes.

The political strategy of racial confrontation, much of which was borrowed from the civil-rights movement of which contemporary black politics is considered an extension, still plays well in congressional districts with African-American majorities. But there are only 21 such districts in the House and black representatives already serve in 20 of them. If there are to be increases in black congressional representation, more African-Americans must be elected in more racially diverse districts.

But those considerations don't especially concern the diminutive but combative congressman from Chicago's far South Side. His district has a population of about 500,000, 70 percent of whom are black, 23 percent Latino and 7 percent white. With his victory, Savage now sees himself as the leading player in a revitalized black independent movement in the city and across the country. Since the 1987 death of Chicago Mayor Harold Washington, that movement has been essentially in the doldrums. But there are many who would prefer a moribund movement to the one led by the mercurial Gus Savage. □

against exaggerated charges—aired by Phelan at the end of the campaign—that Pincham was "soft" on rapists and criminals as an appeals judge. Ultimately, Phelan won with 40 percent over Pincham's 32 percent. Exit polls showed that Phelan garnered about 10 percent of black voters, who comprise about one-third of the county's electorate, while Pincham garnered only 6 percent of whites.

Orr withdrew from the county board president race to run for county clerk and won handily with black and white support, one of the few triumphs of the Washington reform tradition. But black Alderman Danny Davis, a widely respected fellow advocate of interracial reform politics and close ally of Orr's, lost his bid against a lackluster white organization incumbent, a continuing indication of the resistance of many whites to support blacks. Non-threatening, traditionalist black candidates won one top democratic slot each on county and state tickets.

**Engine trouble:** The Washington coalition has collapsed, claims Rose, because of "the dichotomy between the nationalists and the interracial reformers." Nationalists have been winning the internal battles "and losing the wars," he adds. The enthusiastic backing of U.S. Rep. Gus Savage by many black leaders, however, represents a triumph of the nationalism that dooms broader coalitions.

Although many think Pincham was really preparing for the 1992 mayoral race, the con-

tinued fragmentation of the Washington coalition makes the re-election of Daley, who enjoyed a 57 percent good-to-excellent job rating in a February poll, even more likely.

Daley has played his cards carefully, pursuing some reforms in governmental ethics, the environment and health care and promoting politically safe initiatives like tree planting. But Daley also has quietly cut back the numbers of blacks in city administrative jobs; angered gays, women and minorities with his revamping of city human-relations offices; and abandoned the openness and citizen involvement that Washington tried to introduce.

**Chicago's 'new machine' has adopted Harold Washington's reform policies but largely neglects blacks and does not share the late mayor's vision of strong citizen participation and a diverse, neighborhood-oriented economy.**

The city has given more support to big real-estate developers and dropped the emerging city commitment to encourage manufacturing. Some of the development projects, especially those that are publicly subsidized, may yet backfire against Daley. His secretly prepared plan for a new airport, which would wipe out several blue-collar neighborhoods, several major factories and important wetlands, has run into stiff opposition. Many lawyers who backed Daley have picked up fat contracts from the city or businesses seeking to influence the city. "The old politics is back of rewarding friends and political allies," observed John Cameron, associate director of Illinois Public Action Council, a consumer lobby.

Both major parties are fielding peculiar mixed-bag tickets in the fall. When Republican Gov. James Thompson chose not to run for a fifth term, moderate Secretary of State Jim Edgar seemed like a good bet as his successor. But Edgar, who endorsed making a temporary income-tax hike permanent and has taken a strong pro-choice stance, faced a surprisingly strong defection from the party's right wing, which gave a third of its primary votes to his conservative challenger.

**Conservative hurdles:** While moderate Republicans like former Sen. Charles Percy have done well in Illinois, the party's increasingly militant right that helped defeat Percy could also hurt Edgar. But, observes Rose, "Edgar's refusal to cave in to the right serves

him very well with crossover Democrats." Edgar could also find some comfort in the narrow defeat in Chicago's suburban Republican legislative primary of Penny Pullen, a nationally prominent anti-abortion advocate, by a pro-choice woman.

One Edgar advantage is his Democratic opponent, Attorney General Neil Hartigan, a vacillating opportunist who has often been weak on consumer issues and hostile to abortion rights. Now he is attacking Edgar from the right as being pro-tax, a strategy destined to divide Democrats and win few Republicans, despite suburban tax revolts.

Incumbent Democratic Sen. Paul Simon is favored to win re-election, but U.S. Rep. Lynn Martin, a Republican from Rockford, is likely to give him a tight, expensive race (Simon expects to spend \$8 million). Simon and other Democrats will suffer from the likelihood that Chicago blacks will find little reason to get excited about the ticket.

Both Democrats and Republicans face problems of how to knit together fractious blocs. "Democrats could deal with race if they could figure out how to deal with money," asserts Cameron. "You can build cross-race coalitions around progressive themes if you're not afraid to take on powers that be, but you can't if you're in hock to them." As elsewhere, the rising cost of campaigning in Illinois makes the prospect of progressive politics and its potential coalitions seem more and more remote. □



# Automakers

Continued from page 6

Japanese firms have been able to produce new models much faster than the Big Three. Japanese carmakers take about 30 months to produce a new model, while U.S. companies take an average of five years. As a result, Japanese companies can respond far more quickly to consumer tastes than their American competitors.

The Japanese companies continue to enjoy a large advantage in labor costs. Except for Mazda, the Japanese companies have built their own plants in rural areas of the South and Midwest where unions are weak. And they have hired young workers with few health problems. By contrast, the unionized Big Three paid not only higher wages but also much higher health benefits and pensions. Dan Luria, principal scientist at the Industrial Technology Institute in Ann

Arbor, Mich., estimates that when wages and benefits are figured together, Japanese companies enjoy a 20 percent cost edge over the Big Three.

The Japanese also have benefited from a distinct advantage in consumer perception. Two decades of American clunkers have taken their toll on consumer confidence in American cars. Thus many American consumers, when faced with a choice between an equally well-made American and Japanese car, continue to believe that the Japanese model is better made. Mitsubishi makes its Eclipse and Chrysler its Plymouth Laser and Eagle Talon at the jointly owned Chrysler-Mitsubishi plant in Normal, Ill. The cars are virtually identical. But in 1989 Mitsubishi sold 32,018 Eclipses, while Plymouth Laser and Eagle Talon together sold only 28,243.

**No help here:** Since the Chrysler bailout of 1980, the Big Three have also suffered from government indifference. For instance,

legislators have continued to advocate raising average fuel standards for American-made cars without attempting to eliminate the special problems these standards create for the automakers.

The problems stem from relatively low gasoline prices in the U.S., which pose this dilemma for the Big Three: the only way they can meet the average fuel standards is by building fuel-efficient subcompact cars, but as long as gasoline remains cheap, demand for such cars remains low. As a result, American producers have been unable to reduce their costs or increase their volume enough to make a profit producing subcompacts. In contrast, the high cost of gasoline in Japan and Western Europe has created demand for small cars, and Japanese and European auto companies have become proficient at building them. Thus the only way the U.S. government can raise average fuel standards without discriminating against American produc-

ers is by creating the conditions for greater small-car demand in the U.S.—perhaps by instituting a gasoline tax.

Government trade policies have also placed American firms at a disadvantage, even though auto imports currently account for 65 percent of the U.S. trade deficit with Japan. Last winter, for instance, the Treasury Department overruled the U.S. Customs Service, which had been charging imported minivans and sport-utility vehicles the 25 percent tariff automatically charged to trucks. Treasury ruled that the vehicles were in fact cars and therefore not subject to a tariff.

The ruling was a victory for Japan's Washington lobbyists. Previously the Japanese had insisted these vehicles were trucks because they didn't want them counted as part of the voluntary restrictions on car imports. This time around Japan's auto lobbyists in Washington, led by former Bush campaign aide Jim Lake, succeeded in getting the best of both worlds: they not only got Treasury to declare the vehicles cars and therefore exempt from the tariff but when figuring import quotas on cars, they retained their classification as trucks.

Among Washington policy makers, there is little interest in doing anything that would aid the Big Three in competing against the Japanese transplants. Most policy makers refuse even to distinguish between an American and a foreign-owned company. But from the standpoint of unionized labor and the industrial Midwest, there is a significant difference between the Big Three and the Japanese transplants.

In the last decade, as the U.S. carmakers have been forced to mimic Japanese methods, they have worked with the UAW to create a strange but welcome hybrid of Japanese "teamism" and American industrial democracy. The shop-floor culture of American factories has been radically transformed, giving unionized autoworkers a far greater voice than ever before in determining their working conditions. At Chrysler, top management and union officials even meet to discuss the company's investment strategy.

But in the non-unionized transplants, labor participation is purely on an individual level. Teamwork and cooperation are motivational tools. Without a union, power rests entirely with management. If the transplants take over, as MIT's Womack predicts, the prospects for any kind of industrial democracy will diminish.

The transplants are also destroying the network of domestic suppliers that had grown up around the Big Three. The transplants either import crucial parts or bring their suppliers with them. According to a 1988 study by the General Accounting Office, the cars produced by Japanese transplants have 38 percent locally produced parts, compared to 88 percent for the Big Three.

Clearly, if during the '90s the U.S. carmakers continue their downward slide, the havoc wreaked on highly unionized Northern cities like Flint, Detroit and Toledo, Ohio, will far exceed anything portrayed in *Roger and Me*.

To prevent this destruction, the Big Three will have to continue to adapt successful Japanese techniques to American conditions. But the government may eventually have to step in as it did with Chrysler—demanding higher performance in exchange for loan guarantees or trade and investment protection. In the present Republican era, however, such intervention is extremely unlikely.

'Listen, my momma may  
have raised a mean child, but  
she raised no hypocrites.'

—Molly Ivins, *The Progressive*



## Molly Ivins on the Bush Administration:

"We do have some minimal standards for citizenship. Real Texans do not wear blue slacks with little green whales all over them. Real Texans do not refer to trouble as 'deep doo-doo.' George Bush has a hard time passing."

*The Progressive*, March 1988

"Deep down, George Bush is shallow."

*The Progressive*, March 1989

"While people rejoiced the world over at the end of the Cold War, the United States under George Bush seems destined to be the last country in the neighborhood to be dipped for ticks."

*The Progressive*, January 1990

"Having upset every living person between the Rio Grande and Tierra del Fuego by invading Panama, our only President then proposed to settle everyone down by dispatching the ineffable Dan Quayle on a peace mission. To tell them all they looked like happy campers to him. Unfortunately, as one country after another elected not to receive Danny Q., his mission had to be scaled back. They finally let him out to say hidy to the maitre d' at a Taco Bell."

*The Progressive*, March 1990

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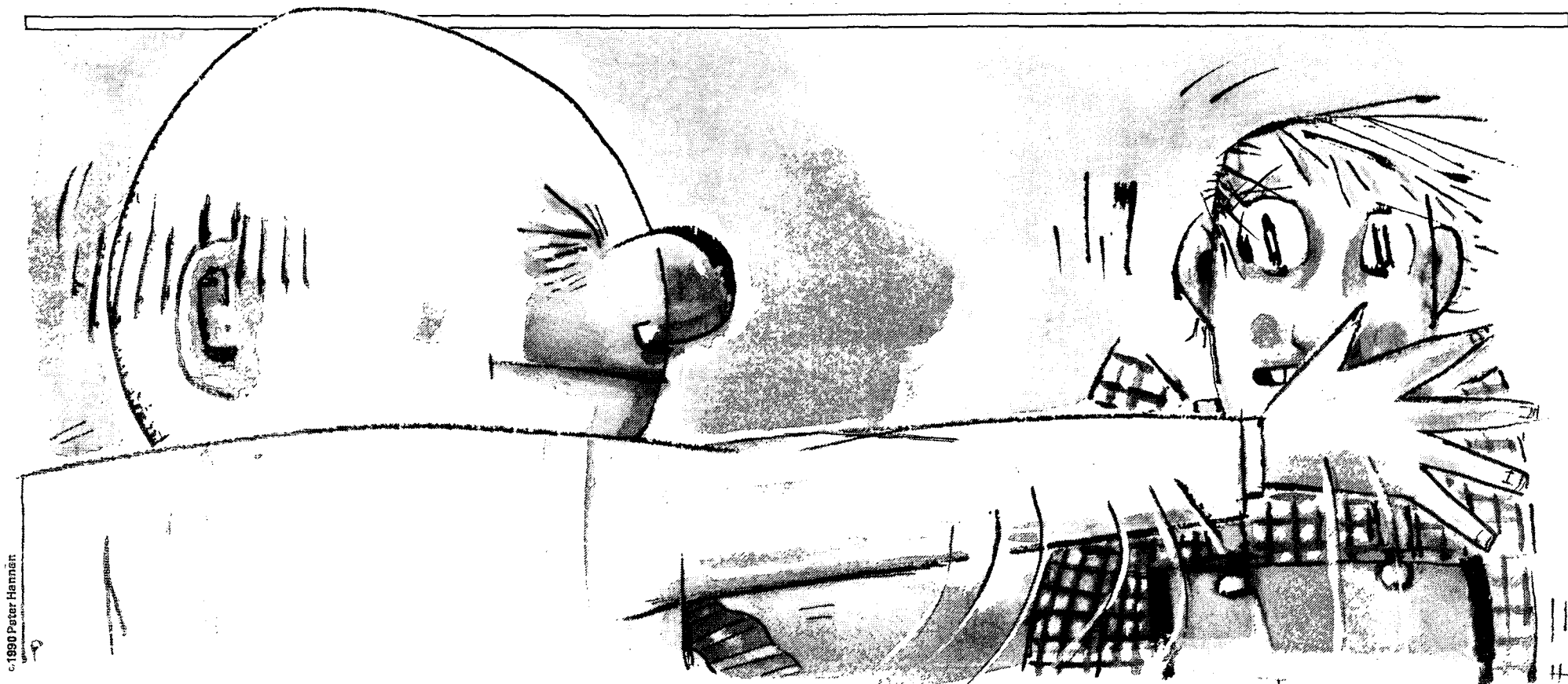
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ASITEE





By Stacey Colino

## Long arm of the lawsuit SLAPPs at dissenters

**A**NY TIME THE LITTLE GUY STANDS UP FOR his rights, refusing to be intimidated by Big Business, he stands a chance of being quashed. Take the case of three California farmers who boldly criticized in writing two agribusiness giants. Had they known their sentiments would bring a lawsuit, they might have restrained their pens.

Their dispute began when Proposition 9, a project to bring more water from Northern California to the Central Valley and Southern California, was put on a 1982 ballot in central California. The three farmers, who supported the canal, ran a full-page ad in local newspapers criticizing J.G. Boswell Co. and the

### FIRST AMENDMENT

Salzer Land Co. and asking, "Who are Boswell & Salzer? And why are they trying to cut off our water?"

"Salzer and Boswell have enough water resources to outlast the next drought.... Smaller farmers don't have those resources, and Boswell and Salzer know this," the ad claimed. "If the small farms go out of business, Boswell and Salzer will be able to totally dominate California agriculture, setting prices where they want them."

Next thing the farmers knew, Boswell, but not Salzer, filed a libel lawsuit against "Family Farmers for Proposition 9," claiming the advertisement accused the company of price-fixing on farm commodities. Boswell sought \$2.5 million in damages from Jack and Jeff Thomson and Ken Wegis, prominent local farmers, along with 1,000 "John Does," so that anyone who joined the push for Prop 9 could become a defendant in the suit. The ad barely caused a stir—California voters rejected the initiative a few weeks later. But the lawsuit, hailed as "a legal battle between David and Goliath," grabbed headlines.

Eventually the libel suit was thrown out of court, but not before the case attracted attention as a new type of litigation: a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP), also known as a political-intimidation lawsuit. "It was a transparent abuse of the legal system," says Ralph Wegis, the Bakersfield attorney who represented the Thomsons and Ken Wegis, his distant cousin. "Boswell was trying to intimidate the hell out of them, and it worked pretty well. No other farmers

wanted to come out against Boswell because they were afraid of being sued." (Attorneys representing Boswell refused to comment on the case.)

**A chilling effect:** SLAPPs, according to University of Denver law professor George Pring and sociologist Penelope Canan, who together coined the term, have become an increasingly popular way for big business and public officials to squelch political debate. The two have identified more than 300 such lawsuits in which individuals and interest groups had been sued for expressing their political, environmental or social views. Cases like *Family Farmers vs. J.G. Boswell Co.* are cropping up across the country and sending a clear and alarming message: if you speak up about your beliefs, you risk being sued.

That message is being sent through a variety of legal maneuvers.

- In 1981, Rick Webb, an environmentalist who raised blueberries and honeybees on a West Virginia farm, informed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that he believed a coal company had polluted the Buckhannon River so badly that fish were killed. The coal company nailed him with a \$200,000 libel suit that was eventually thrown out of court.

- Last year, a group of Washington and Warren County residents in upstate New York staged demonstrations and wrote letters to local newspapers protesting a plan to build a solid-waste incinerator near their communities. The two counties hit them with a \$1.5 million personal-damages suit that has since been dismissed.

- In 1979, the National Organization for Women (NOW) organized a boycott of conventions in states whose legislatures had not ratified the Equal Rights Amendment. The attorney general of Missouri socked NOW with a lawsuit on behalf of affected local businesses. That suit was also thrown out of court.

- In what may be the most bizarre case, the crew members of a Navy munitions train sued S. Brian Willson, a Vietnam vet who lost his legs in 1987 when their train ran over him

at a California demonstration against U.S. arms shipments to Central America. The crew members claimed they suffered "mental anguish and emotional and physical distress" from the incident. In January, a federal judge dismissed the case. Willson is now suing the U.S. government, the train crew and two supervisors at the naval station where the accident occurred.

Pring and Canan began studying this legal trend in the mid-'80s after discovering that a large number of lawsuits had been filed against environmental groups in the '70s. But after years of research, Canan says their work has only scratched the issue's surface. "We will never know exactly how many of these lawsuits exist because they are designed to mask their actual intent," she says.

Canan believes that the prime motivation behind filing these lawsuits is to stifle political expression—and that, she says, is illegal. The First Amendment guarantees citizens "the right to petition the government for redress of grievances" and protects such be-

### SLAPPs are an increasingly popular way for big business and public officials to squelch political debate.

haviors as circulating petitions, writing letters to public officials, reporting violations or making complaints to government bodies, conducting elections, filing lawsuits, testifying at public hearings, demonstrating in public and conducting boycotts intended to influence government action. And while most SLAPPs eventually fail in court, they often succeed in an indirect and perhaps more insidious way: they force their targets to assume the financial and psychological burdens of defending themselves in court.

**Skirting the issue:** To get around the First Amendment, SLAPP filers cast the of-

fending behavior as defamation, business damage, personal injury, conspiracy, abuse of judicial process, abuse of civil rights or nuisance. "The courts have to accept most filings because they go in camouflaged as legitimate claims," Canan says.

"Our judicial system is being used—and used effectively—to chill legitimate public participation in the government process," Pring says. "The protracted and costly nature of litigation provides the leverage."

Pring and Canan report that in the cases they studied, the issues at stake frequently include metropolitan development (zoning, land use, real-estate development), the use of basic resources (air, water, wildlife), civil rights, performance of licensed professionals and adequacy of government service.

Activists—including individuals, public-interest groups and civic and social organizations—are particularly at risk of becoming SLAPP targets. The Sierra Club, for example, has been sued at least half a dozen times for its positions on environmental issues. Plaintiffs, on the other hand, are usually developers, public utilities, corporations, alleged polluters and state and local governments. Damage claims range from \$10,000 to \$100 million, with an average of \$9 million.

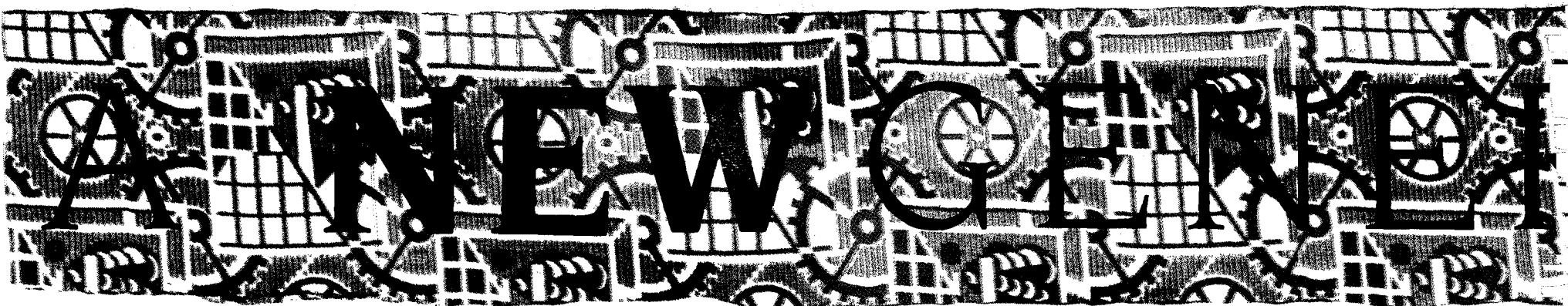
But collecting damages isn't always a priority behind these lawsuits. "These people don't file these lawsuits to win," says David Miller, an attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in Denver who has defended several SLAPPs. "You file to intimidate people so they'll drop their opposition."

The fact that nearly two-thirds of all SLAPPs are eventually dismissed in court proves that filers don't have to have a good case; all they need is money and a lawyer. But before such cases are dismissed, they tax already overburdened courts and government-enforcement programs and force defendants to face lengthy court procedures—an average of 36 months—and costly legal fees. In addition to bearing the actual cost of defending the suit, SLAPP targets often suffer psychological trauma, threats to have insurance cut off, the diversion of resources from the original issue and an undermined belief in political participation. As Nancy Stearns, assistant attorney general of New York, says, "Even if the person filing the suit doesn't win, it has its impact. Most people sued under those circumstances can't really

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## By Alan Snitow

Two generations are behind the rapid changes underway in the Soviet Union. The Gorbachov generation, which initiated the reform movement in the Communist Party, is now being met from below by a younger, more radical generation of reformers whose movement is independent of the party.

Elena Zelinskaya is a leader of this new generation. At 35 she is too young to have seen the purges, the war or the Holocaust, but she grew up in Leningrad surrounded by the survivors, immersed in their trauma and exhaustion. "Our parents, our grandparents were crushed completely."

Zelinskaya's generation was the first to grow up knowing of hardship but not directly experiencing it. She received better education than her parents, learned foreign languages and watched as "our elder brothers," the dissidents, were jailed, exiled or banished.

The people shaped by these experiences are now the leaders of a new social movement based on unofficial political and cultural clubs independent of the Communist Party.

These activists are not well known abroad, which makes it easy for self-appointed spokespeople to fill the vacuum for the important American market. Boris Kagarlitsky, who writes for many left publications and is now touring the U.S., has done just that. A fluent English speaker with a flare for self-promotion, Kagarlitsky has little if any influence in the Soviet movement itself.

Elena Zelinskaya's thinking is much more representative of the movement's mainstream. She became a journalist early on. In 1982, as a dissident, she started publishing an underground (samizdat) magazine for children called For Boys and Girls. Later she edited an influential magazine of the informal movement called Merkur (Mercury), and now she is the main editor for the Northwest Information Agency, a network of informal journalists in the Leningrad region and the Baltics. The next step being planned is publication of Leningrad's first independent mass-circulation newspaper.

This interview for a public-radio documentary on the informal movement is culled from hours of conversation in Zelinskaya's apartment late last year. I have left in some of her ragged but often refreshing English.

### Tell me about the independent political associations that have been forming here and your role in them.

We are involved in the democratic movement. When we say "movement" we mean all associations, clubs, small and big groups—including the Leningrad Peoples Front—that have a democratic direction. Typically the groups are without exact borders or memberships but share an idea.

That's why we have no right to say we have new, independent political organizations. We have a movement, but not political parties or organizations like in the Baltic republics. The Popular Front in Latvia, that is a political organization. [Ed. note: There are independent coalitions called "popular" or "people's" fronts in many Russian cities, including Leningrad and Moscow. These popular fronts are not mass organizations, unlike those in the Baltic republics.]

Here in Leningrad, there is only one organization that we consider political, the Communist Party. "Political" and "independent," these are different things.

All the independent groups belong to the movement, and when we have an important event in Leningrad, all join together in one bloc. This happened during the elections to the Congress of People's Deputies in March 1989. Our electoral bloc was very strong and had great success, the biggest in the country. [Ed.: In 1989, Leningrad voters defeated all the city's top party leaders, even though they were running unopposed. More than half the voters crossed out the candidates' names, depriving them of the 50 percent vote they needed to be elected. This bloc re-formed for the current elections and is winning many seats in local and regional government.]

After the election, the Leningrad Popular Front was organized. It's not very big—several

thousand people—but it has a broad political outlook and is organized in every district of the city and in many big enterprises.

You must understand that the political opinions and views of most of the main new popular, independent organizations are similar to the opinions and views of the liberal wing of the Communist Party.

**Last year, the unofficial, or "informal," press seemed to be small and isolated, but now joint work between Communist reformers and informal activists seems possible.**

Yes. My friend Andrei Tsekhanovich and I work closely together as journalists and activists, but Andrei is a Communist. I am not. I am a very left dissident. Five years ago it was impossible not only to work together but even to sit at one table. Yes, we are from different political lives.

I studied in the dissident press and then, after perestroika, I worked in the informal press. [Ed.: The dissident press was underground before perestroika. Since 1985, samizdat, or self-published, magazines have been distributed more openly, although they are not formally recognized.]

Andrei all his life worked in the official press. He is an official journalist, and we have a funny alliance. When we write an article for the official press, we can use my unofficial contacts, my background and my information. When we need information from officials, Andrei visits them with his visit card like an official journalist and asks for information they would never give me. Andrei thinks that we together are an example that change is possible in our country, that people can change the way they think without a catastrophe. If we can work together, maybe these two parts of our lives, the dissident and Communist parts, can live together.

Now we in the informal movement have decided to organize and publish a new informal newspaper in Leningrad. So far we have an information agency and we are awaiting the new national press law that will change the whole situation in the press. After this law, with competition from an independent press, the official press will have to make changes, or it may die.

Andrei says that after the new press law the main danger to the official press will not be that they will have no subscribers but that journalists will leave them for the independent press. The economic situation in the official press is very bad, and the salary of a journalist

## Great expectations, or, a tale of two peoples

**When you visited the U.S. last year, what was the big difference between your expectations and what you found there?**

You know, always I think that I am free of propaganda. I mean our Soviet propaganda. So, it was a big surprise to find my expectations of the U.S. still influenced by it. I expected the big difference in standard of living, but I never expected there would be a difference between American and Soviet people.

I was surprised that the style of relationships is very different. The people in America are very merry, very healthful—like children, you see. When I was talking with Americans in the U.S., I felt myself like an adult in a school for teenagers. They were very clever, many more clever than I, and they have a higher level of education and can understand things better. But in one aspect, the civil aspect, they are like children.

We Russians have had a unique experience in social life. We have seen such a thing you never read. The ordinary American man is younger than a small boy in the Soviet Union in this aspect.

Our life here is poorer than in America, but all the things we have, we have more deeply. Our relationships are deeper, but not so merry and easy. I have seen you are very friendly to each other, to people who you see the first time in your life—and the last time.

In the Soviet Union, if we are friends we are connected very closely, because if I tell my friend my political opinion, my life will depend on his silence. And so we are connected—maybe like in prison. You see, we have very close and deep relationships be-

tween people. This is a necessity.

Sometimes I think that Americans—including journalists and experts who ask us about our life here—see only the surface. They never try to understand deeper. Sometimes I think they are afraid to do it.

To know Russians better... it's very dangerous. You know, in the West there's a sort of euphoria just now about our political situation, about the changes, reforms and things like that. All people now love Russians. When I was in the United States, I felt like a pet. They all loved me very much and did everything I wanted. It was funny. I'm a very different person than they see. I have very hard work here, a very hard life. I'm not a young girl.

When my American friends visited me here in Leningrad, we Russians had a lot of problems agreeing among ourselves what they should do during their visit. Sometimes different Russians who worked with them wanted different things, and we discussed this in our usual style. My American friends were shocked by this. They said: "You are so aggressive. You cried."

Yes, we are aggressive. Maybe only our children or our grandchildren will become quiet, more suitable for European life, for American life. I think Europeans and Americans need us very much, need our experience, need our future. If here in Soviet Union we continue to live as we have in the past, we will continue to be very dangerous to the whole world.

It's true we need Western help right now, and this help must be without any illusions. You must help us like you would a very ill person. We must build relationships with you with open eyes.





is very small. Our independent press can already pay more.

**Tell me about your political history. How old are you?**

Ha! It's not a secret. I belong to a very interesting generation—people between 30 and 40 years old. It is a very significant generation in our country, because I was born in the year that Stalin died [1953]. Our childhood was in the first liberal years in this country.

It was the time of openness, the first in this country—I mean, the end of the '50s, the beginning of the '60s. Our parents felt more free, and we children lived in this atmosphere.

The Brezhnev period was the time of our youth. It's now in fashion to say bad words about this period, but I never do because it was good for us. We became the first generation in our country that lived without starvation. My friends who are 10 years older than I am remember starvation in their childhood. I lived in better conditions, maybe not like an American child, but better than the way my child lives now.

We were the first generation that could study, because it became easy to get books and to listen to the radio. The Voice of America, for example, has been a very important factor in our lives. We started to study foreign languages so we had the possibility to speak with foreign people. We have new possibilities, and we got an education.

We were the first generation that was not crushed. Our parents lived during the Stalin period, during the war, during the Nazi blockade of Leningrad and after the blockade. [Ed.: An estimated 1 million people died, most of them from starvation, during the Nazi blockade of Leningrad from September 1941 to January 1944.] Our parents saw prison camps and, you know, eight of my relatives died during the blockade. My grandfather was killed in a camp. There are no families in Russia without losses.

Our elder brothers and friends who belonged to the dissident movement also belonged to the crushed generation. I was a young student during the late '60s and '70s when the dissident movement was destroyed completely. A lot of my friends became dissidents, but they were older than me.

In 1982, the last dissidents were arrested and we were alone. Me and my husband and several of my friends of the same age became without older friends. We were afraid but not closely involved in their problems. So we

stayed free.

Then, you know, many of the intelligentsia emigrated. But we were too young, so we stayed here, without big losses but alone. So that's why all the leaders of the informal movement are people between the ages of 30 and 40. Back in 1983 and '84—before *perestroika*—it was a time of preparing for *perestroika* inside of ordinary people. We understood that people were very tired of this system, very tired. They were tired of stress, tired of fear and, most of all, they were tired of nothing to do. It's very difficult to stay in the office all day and do nothing.

Before *perestroika*, people were angry at stupid authority. The main thing that made us angry was their stupidity. Not their power or aggressiveness but their stupidity. And the most significant thing we understood during these years was that they cannot rule us. They want very much to do so, but they cannot. The main result of these 70 years is a poor economy with a lot of catastrophes—the railways for example, the Chernobyl catastrophe. It is the result of their very stupid management. People were tired of it. Nobody worked. Nobody went to their meetings. Nobody.

You know, in the last year before *perestroika*, if a director of big enterprise organized a demonstration for the 7th of November, he needed to pay people. It was a special price. If you participated in the demonstration you got three rubles; if you brought a pigeon, you got five rubles, but if you bring a slogan on a poster, you would get five or six rubles or one day off. It was the only way to get people to a demonstration.

*Perestroika* is not the brilliant idea of Gorbachov. It was a necessity because they would have had a catastrophe. People stopped working. People stopped participating. Maybe before this time people were very much under the stress of fear, but in this period people tired of being afraid. You know, it is impossible to be afraid for your whole life.

We were used to these things. I think that for American people, it would be impossible to live under this pressure, but for us, who lived under the Stalin repression, what does mean Brezhnev? Toys for us.

When Gorbachov became leader in 1985 and he started these reforms, for the first year or more people did not believe him. Not him personally—we never believed anybody. We didn't believe in the possibility of change. But during those first two years of *perestroika*,

something happened. I don't understand what, but something happened and we started to believe. People who belong to this generation believed first. I was 30 and my friends were in the most mobile age, and we wanted very much to live normally.

When I say "we," I mean our circle of Leningrad intelligentsia. Different clubs started to organize, the club of literature, the journalists club, the Greens club and cultural clubs, and we saw that we were not repressed. We did what we wanted, but we felt no pressure. Nobody arrested us. People started to awake.

In the spring of 1988 the Perestroika Club, at that time the strongest club in the movement, organized a very big meeting to protest an anti-*perestroika* manifesto published in the official press. This meeting was shown on local TV. It was very unusual; it was impossible. Still now I can't understand why they allowed it to be shown on TV.

People like myself from the democratic movement spoke at this meeting of the necessity of organizing opposition parties. It was a few years ago, and now it is easy to say such things. But then, it was very unusual, very shocking.

After this TV program, plenty of people joined the movement. The official press had written a lot about us, but in very dirty phrases. But after this TV program, citizens could see themselves that we were not awful people. We were very ordinary, not something awful like they wrote in the newspapers. Citizens started to support us.

After the 1989 election we became very strong here. The Popular Front was organized and consists now of maybe several thousand people. That's not very big, but people joined very quickly. Just now the informal organizations are still small, but they have the same internal process as the big political organizations. So this informal movement is like a school, a political school, and in 10 years these people will be in authority, in government.

To return to the beginning of our conversation, the best way for the West to help the Soviet Union is to teach these people. We must spend a lot of time on simple things. For example, just now we obtained an office for our informational agency. We spent three months just to reach an agreement.

We can overcome all the barriers except our low level of experience and skill. I mean we have no management school. We have no management at all in this country. And just

now we begin to be managers and we have no experience, no special knowledge.

You know, this is a very funny thing, but sometimes I ask our American consul for advice. Soon we will open our newspaper's office, and for the occasion we want to organize a reception. But I don't know how to do it, so I asked the wife of the American consul how it's done. That is why we have a lot of negotiations with American and West German businessmen, to organize managers' schools.

**What does the future planning look like for Leningrad?**

Just now a lot of people in the informal movement are starting to return to their jobs. We cleaned the atmosphere for ourselves, for our jobs. Now we must start again to work. I think that the time for meetings is over.

We must work like professional politicians, like professional journalists, like professional experts in the economy. For example, a big group of experts from the Leningrad movement is organizing a project for the Leningrad region's economic independence.

I think that first we must gain a majority in the city soviet. Then we must have economic independent, like the Balkan republics. We don't want to have political independents like the Baltic republics but economic independence from Moscow's control.

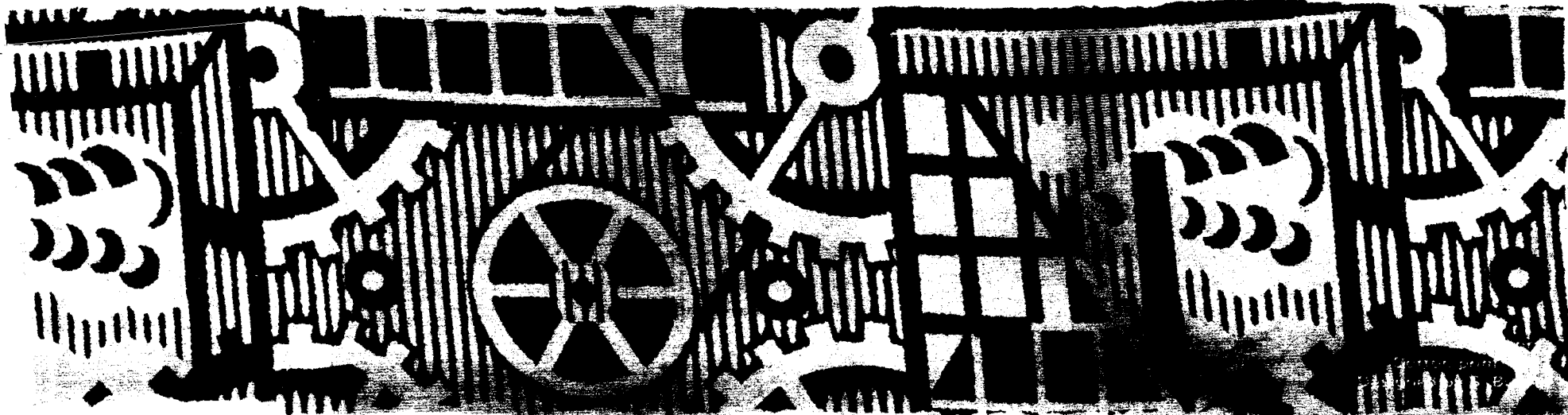
**What kind of economy do people envision? Are they thinking of a model that looks like Sweden, France, the U.S.? What does a market economy in the Soviet experience look like?**

In my opinion we can never copy the American market. We have different beginnings and a different social experience. I think that we will have our own way. Not like Sweden, not like France, not like the U.S. I'm afraid our future will be like Poland and we will have a catastrophe in the economy during the next two years.

**When I was here last, people talked about such a catastrophe, including the possibility of much more serious food shortages, riots, even civil war. They said it's not possible to go back to the old ways but new, violent upheaval in the Soviet Union is possible.**

This is a very complicated question. I'm not pessimistic, but we must be ready for very bad things. We cannot make a prognosis. □

Alan Snitow is a news producer at KTVU-TV in the Bay Area. He is president of the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, which will take place in Moscow at the end of March.





# EDITORIAL

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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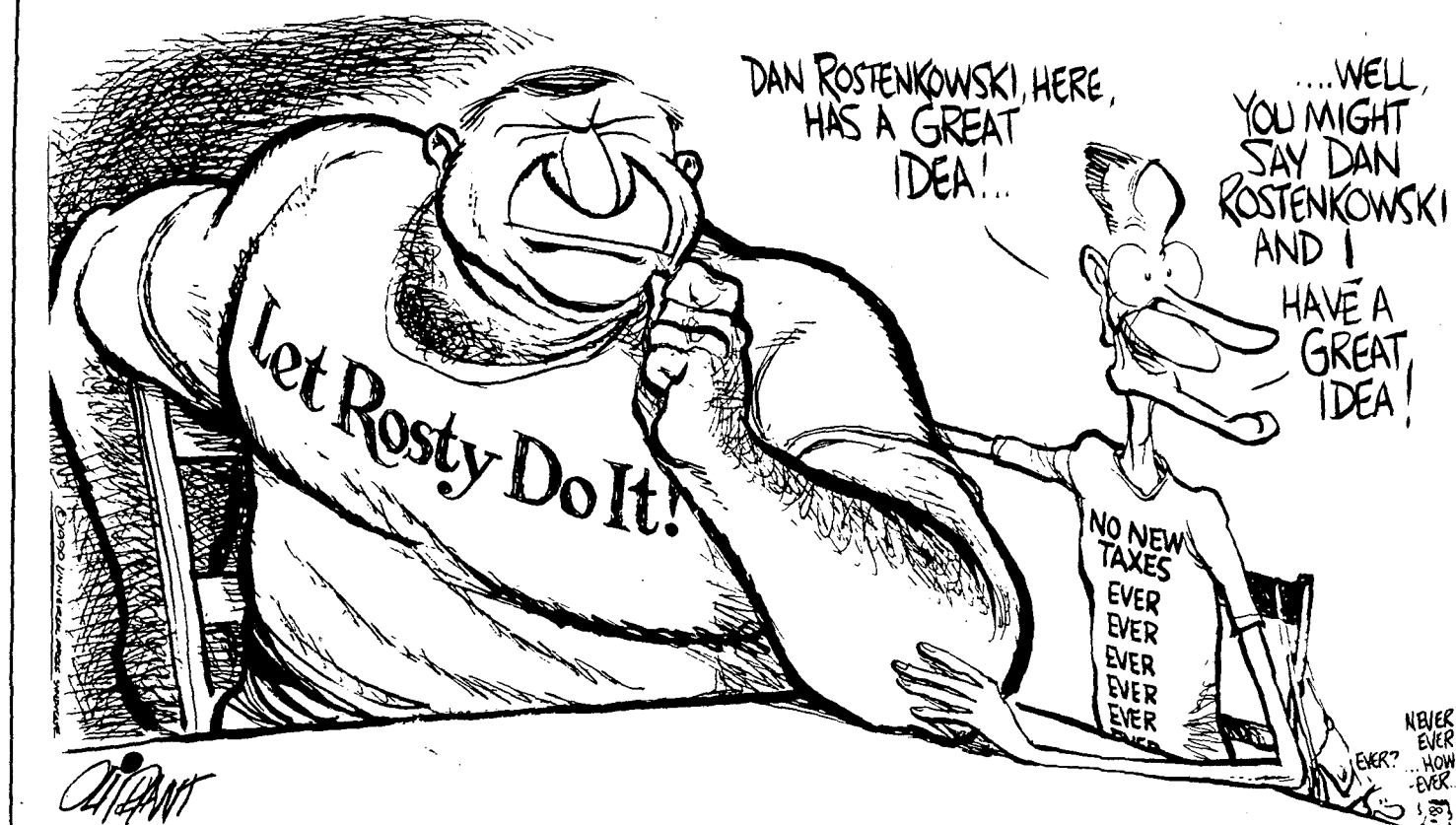
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## Rostenkowski comes to George Bush's rescue

The Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act, passed in 1985 when Ronald Reagan stood as a bulwark against cuts in military spending or increases in the income tax, was designed to force Congress to cut social spending without having to face any social issues head on. In subsequent years, the Gramm-Rudman targets for annual budget-deficit reductions have never been met, even with many billions of dollars of federal spending classified as "off budget." Even so, Gramm-Rudman has helped keep social spending far below the amounts required to satisfy the needs and desires of the American public for improved medical care, education, clean air and water, affordable housing and public transportation.

Since Bush took office last year, the national debt has been taken more seriously as a contributing factor in the nation's continuing economic decline, and as a result so has the annual federal budget deficit. But, like Reagan, Bush has done all in his power to avoid cuts in military spending, while his lips have said "no new taxes" so often that he cannot advocate increased taxation—and, in fact, has advocated further cuts for the wealthy in the form of reduced capital-gains taxes. So even though Bush talks about being the education president and the environmental president, and despite putting forth grandiose rhetoric about improved health care and transportation, his proposals consist entirely of exhortations to the states or private groups on these issues. When it comes to the federal budget, this administration's order of the day is even more cuts in social spending.

One might expect that Democrats in Congress would challenge Bush's priorities, yet while they spout rhetoric, few act. Instead, they prefer simply to sit back and watch the administration dig itself into a hole. Yet there is one incredible exception, Dan Rostenkowski (D-IL), chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, who apparently shares Bush's concerns. And on March 10, Rostenkowski made a startling attempt to come to Bush's rescue.

He proposes to do all the things a Reaganite could desire: cut domestic spending and Social Security by 4 percent, make the smallest possible cuts in military spending—3 percent a year for five years—and impose highly regressive excise taxes, allegedly balanced by a minimal increase in income taxes on the wealthiest of Americans. Overall his proposals are aimed at reducing the federal

deficit by \$511 billion over five years, but these reductions would be at the expense of the victims of Reaganomics rather than the beneficiaries.

As the Washington-based Citizens for Tax Justice points out, non-Social Security domestic spending fell from 9.8 percent of gross national product to 7.3 percent during the Reagan years—a drop of 26 percent. Rostenkowski would cut this even further. In addition, cutting Social Security benefits would only add to what Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) characterizes as "thievery" from the Social Security trust fund. The fund is running a huge surplus, which should accumulate to guarantee its security, but which has instead been used, through budgetary sleight of hand, to disguise the size of true budget deficits. Rostenkowski would further victimize those paying into the Social Security fund by reducing the benefits they have earned, and therefore the real incomes of many low-income elderly recipients, by some 6 percent.

Perhaps the most shocking aspect of his plan is that he would reduce military spending even less than Bush himself. At a time when virtually everyone in Washington recognizes the need for substantial cuts in the obscenely large amounts of money being wasted to subsidize the giant arms-manufacturing corporations, Rostenkowski comes to their defense.

But there is no need, principled or political, to continue the erosion of social services or to threaten those on Social Security. The American people have indicated in poll after poll that they strongly support any level of cuts in military spending that are presented to them as reasonable by public officials, whether it be 3 percent or 30 percent. And as the Center for Defense Information argues, military spending could be cut by \$100 billion a year without in any way affecting our security. That alone would provide the \$500 billion Rostenkowski proposes to save over the next five years.

And that's not all. In a *Time/CNN* poll taken two weeks ago, three-quarters of those polled favored increases in the income-tax rate of the wealthiest Americans, while similar margins opposed a freeze on Social Security benefits and increased taxes on gasoline. And in poll after poll, large majorities have favored increased social spending.

Clearly, new initiatives are needed. The deficit should be reduced. But, as Citizens for Tax Justice proposes, income taxes should be increased only on the wealthiest of Americans, whose tax burden was cut drastically during the Reagan years. And, of course, as we have urged repeatedly, Congress should start increasing allocations of money for the social services of the nation that are now sorely inadequate.



# LETTERS

## Russian roulette

**D**AVID MOBERG DOES A SERVICE IN FOCUSING on the proposal of Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) to cut Social Security taxes (ITT, Feb. 14). Unfortunately, he comes down on the wrong side of the issue. Contrary to Moberg's view, Moynihan's proposal does not deserve support. Here is why:

- Moynihan's proposal would cut \$55 billion per year from federal revenues. Under the Gramm-Rudman law, which Moynihan's proposal would not change, this decline in revenues would trigger a mandatory cut of equal size in federal spending, unless there is an offsetting tax-revenue increase. Because of Bush's refusal to raise taxes, chances are that there would be budget cuts in vital social programs instead.

- Nearly half of the \$55 billion tax cut would go to corporations. Corporate America is already footing a much smaller part of the tax bill than they used to and should be required to pay more in taxes, not less.

- Most troublesome of all, Moynihan's proposal needlessly jeopardizes future Social Security benefits. The current payroll tax rate is projected to be sufficient to finance Social Security benefits until the middle of the next century. By contrast, cutting payroll taxes now, as Moynihan proposes, will require substantial offsetting increases starting early in the next century—and reaching a higher level than is provided under current law. Is it more equitable for a regressive tax to be cut in the short run and then raised substantially for the next generation? Or might not the political fallout from the need for those increases create a context similar to that of 1983, when a "compromise" was reached to increase payroll taxes and cut Social Security benefits? (Moberg notwithstanding, the '83 benefit cuts were not "minor," especially the increase in retirement age—and especially from a worker's standpoint.) A serious recession could force a replay of the '83 benefit-cut scenario even sooner under Moynihan's plan.

It is not necessary to advocate Moynihan's plan in order to oppose the administration proposal to cut capital-gains taxes. The tax code has become less progressive during the '80s, but cutting a regressive tax in a manner that will require it to be raised sharply in 20 years' time does not address this inequity. It plays Russian roulette with the benefit structure of the nation's most important—and most progressively redistributive—social program.

Sheldon Friedman  
Research Director, United Auto Workers  
Detroit

analyzes and approaches the problems. There is room for coercive mistreatment of participants in the program, yet, at least in this county, the law can be implemented progressively with good effect. There are some right-minded, right-hearted civil servants afoot, and there are ways to benefit welfare recipients. On the other hand, here's my own spin on some of Itzkowitz' criticisms.

To my great surprise, the Fresno County Department of Social Services (DSS) has interpreted the mandate of GAIN as an opportunity to provide genuine assistance in preparing for employment eligible parents receiving Aid for Dependent Children. GAIN can offer educational preparation and remediation for those who have diplomas but test out under 9th-grade levels. It offers a fairly comprehensive assessment of skills, aptitudes, interests and barriers by competent professionals, culminating in a written plan of action that can include one or more of the following: unpaid work experience, up to two years of vocational training (e.g., computer clerical skills, auto mechanics, nursing certifications up to the level of licensed vocational nurse) or degree-granting programs (for example, associate's degrees in alcohol-abuse counseling, paralegal, early childhood education); and assisted job search with the ability to attract employers with an on-the-job-training subsidy.

In addition, participants are given transportation allowances, help with job- or training-related expenses (uniforms, books, tools, etc.) and—most important—child-care allowances.

There are limitations imposed on action plans. Not all desirable trainings are available in a given area, or completable within the two-year limit. Some job goals are not supportable given an individual's assessment profile or the local labor market. And any step along the way to the promised opportunities may be discouraged by the attitude of program staff. What I've seen, however, has been a willingness by the program administrators—especially at the top county level—to give participants the benefit of the doubt and to make adjustments to extend rather than restrict client access to options.

For example, there is a federal "100-hour rule" that says that if a second potential wage earner is present in a welfare household, and if that person works 100 hours at a job, the family loses all welfare benefits. This rule clearly discourages the acceptance of employment at entry-level wages. The Fresno County DSS has pioneered a pilot project to waive this rule and ensure that there is no "net loss of income" and no loss of medical benefits for at least a

year when employment is accepted in this situation.

It is still too early to judge results of these programs, especially since over half the participants are in basic-education components. And in one sense the only real evaluation would be an anecdotal review of how people's lives have been affected, a kind of evaluation too "soft" for legislative uses. But the people I have worked with during the assessment process have mostly participated willingly; and while there is much more resistance at the level of mandatory schooling and job search, there are reports of many cases of attitudinal turnaround attributable to the special efforts of staff in planning and program execution. Participants have felt themselves to be seen and heard, given the chance to think seriously about what to do with their lives. Those who complete general equivalency diploma or other trainings often express feelings of accomplishment and see their long-term possibilities enhanced considerably. They can take short-term steps without sacrificing their children's immediate security.

Despite flaws, GAIN is producing a lot of positive experience for a large number of people; and without direct involvement of a functioning program, Itzkowitz is missing the good stuff possible when a spirit of good intent is present. Still, he is right on the mark in questioning the two frameworks within which these programs exist—the cultural framework and the economic framework.

The cultural presumption (what Itzkowitz calls "the culture of poverty" attitude) is that "we" are doing fine so the goal of welfare programs is to get recipients to feel they can become like us—and then to help them do it.

There is a certain amount of validity here: most people on welfare don't want to be poor and do want to feel themselves usefully engaged in their communities. A large number of them accept—as most of "us" do—that going through educational rites of passage and or seeking employment in the world of ready-made jobs is the best way to accomplish these goals. But many on welfare do not accept these goals. For them these programs can be felt as heavy-handed cultural blackmail.

And when the goal of the program is interpreted more crudely as making welfare recipients part of the "labor pool" as quickly as possible, large numbers of participants are going to wind up in the ebb and flow of low-wage, temporary jobs with a net loss of income and benefits (especially medical). Here the result would likely be an even more entrenched feeling of being superfluous to society at large. This trend would

be more likely in places where (a) the 100-hour rule is in effect; (b) in states with low minimum wage (California's has been \$4.25 for a couple of years); and (c) in areas with a stagnant or increasing unemployment rate. In such areas, Itzkowitz' analysis of federal expenditures as subsidies for employers (and, I would add, training institutions) might be justified.

The other part of the picture is that, even at best, new workers off the welfare rolls are typically not being trained to fill specific shortages or to become needed skilled workers. They tend to become semi-skilled workers in competition with others for entry-level jobs. From the perspective of the individual, he or she may be getting a chance to start near the bottom and work up—and that can be enough to get someone on the way to a successful work career. But in the aggregate, how many data-entry clerks, alcohol-abuse counselors or auto mechanics can the local economy sustain?

What's missing here is the understanding that "work" is often different from "job." People can and do work (i.e., expend labor with inner purpose) outside of the cash economy. Often such work is related to the social cohesiveness of a subculture that is not valued (neither the work nor the subculture) by the dominant society. Nurturing the uncared-for children of relatives and neighbors, for example. Or telling stories and making music. Or teaching Bible class. Or organizing informal self-help projects, safety projects, political activities. Or growing a garden.

When work is defined only as employment in the cash economy—an economy that requires unemployment and a class of marginal workers—and when people are pushed to identify themselves as peripheral members of a workforce instead of as essential workers in their cultural milieu, a critical dehumanization can take place.

The Family Support Act does not recognize the worth and necessity of work done for its own sake, not for its exchange value. It does not encourage people to create work within their communities to meet their own and their neighbors' needs. We talk about our society's neglect of its infrastructure: here that neglect is manifest.

Richard Stone  
Fresno, Calif.

**Editor's note:** Please keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

## Workfare

**I** AM A VOCATIONAL COUNSELOR IN FRESNO COUNTY's implementation of Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) who shares many of Gary Itzkowitz' apprehensions about workfare and the Family Support Act (ITT, Jan. 31). When the program started three years ago, Fresno was one of the first counties "on line." GAIN is California's version of the now-national plan to move welfare recipients off public rolls and into employment via education and training. I still think there are major flaws in how the legislation

## SYLVIA



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## by Nicole Hollander

I WANT to GO OUTSIDE. I WANT to ROAM FREE, FEEL the WIND in MY HAIR... birds in MY TEETH.



BUT SHE KEEPS ME A PRISONER HERE, AGAINST MY NATURE.

I LET HER OUT in the BACKYARD ONCE, BUT A LEAF FELL ON HER AND SHE HID UNDER the COUCH FOR A WEEK.



## Yugoslavia's new government puts its faith in logic of the market

By Kenneth Zapp and Magda Paleczny-Zapp

**L**ATE LAST MONTH, YUGOSLAV VICE PRIME Minister Zivko Pregl came to the U.S. to seek investors in his country's economy. Investment opportunities have improved, he announced. Social ownership and workers self-management will no longer be required. Wage and price controls will be lifted in July. The dinar, having been tied to the German mark at 7 to 1, has become the first convertible currency in Eastern Europe. And inflation, which had been 2,400 percent last year, fell to 8.4 percent in February. In addition, the Yugoslav method of calculating profit has been changed to conform to Western practice. In the past wages were paid from net profits and were not considered costs of production. Now regular wages are considered an expense, and only bonuses are distributed from profits.

But unfortunately for Pregl, American executives were so concerned about the ethnic tensions that seemed to be tearing his country apart that they may have missed his central message. Yugoslav workers, Pregl wanted to make clear, are now encouraged to sell the enterprises they manage, ending his country's 40-year experience with its unique form of industrial democracy.

**New economic system:** In yet another variation of socialism, a new Yugoslav law has created four different forms of business ownership, each of which is supposed to play a major role in the economy. The new system follows the conclusion that social ownership no longer serves the nation's needs. Pregl explains that the Yugoslav form of social ownership had degenerated into "non-ownership" because it led to blurred accountability and responsibility. The new law attempts to avoid this problem by allowing private, foreign, cooperative and state ownership, each with clearly designated authority.

Under this new plan, the government will own services like communication, trans-

portation, media, utilities, health care and armaments, while other enterprises will determine their own ownership structures. In cases of private or foreign ownership, local workers councils must approve the sale of production facilities and will be able to participate in ownership.

Why would workers choose to sell shares in enterprises they now manage? Because, Pregl says, some firms are facing bankruptcy and need infusions of capital that can be obtained only in this way. Working for foreigners, he says, is better than being unemployed, especially in a nation with a 14 percent unemployment rate.

To encourage workers to sell their enterprises, and also to build up capital reserves, the new law provides that workers who sell their enterprises and deposit the proceeds

social ownership, land and natural resources associated with an enterprise were not assigned value, and as a result balance sheets commonly understate the value of an enterprise.

**Whither self-management?:** Under Tito's leadership, Yugoslavia developed its own system of industrial democracy, called self-management. In its early years it produced the world's third-fastest economic growth. With people having a sense of dignity at work, the country industrialized peacefully in one generation. But since 1980, Yugoslavia has suffered intolerable decline. Real incomes fell 50 percent, while party officials used self-management as a slogan to hide their own blunders and political interference.

Self-management is not to blame. Rather,

tion and compete effectively in international markets. Its \$16 billion foreign debt is manageable, according to Assistant Finance Minister Boris Skapin, because of accumulated foreign-currency reserves of \$7 billion and because recent changes in foreign-currency accounts have begun to attract back some of the estimated \$10 billion that Yugoslavs have stored in foreign banks.

Even so, the government wants to reschedule its debt and borrow more in order to provide capital for more rapid growth. But as a condition of new loans, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank insist on more privatization of industry, the development of labor and capital markets and a reduction in social services.

For internal political reasons, Pregl and Skapin see something good in this external pressure. They say it will help the federal government—headed by Ante Markovic, a Croat—in its battles with the more conservative Serbs, who constitute 40 percent of Yugoslavia's population. Since 1988, Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic has destabilized the delicate balance of Yugoslavia's federation by fanning Serbian nationalist sentiments. As a result of his agitation, Kosovo, with a 90 percent Albanian population, and Vojvodina have been reincorporated into greater Serbia. This has incited a rebellion by the Albanians and panic among other nationalities, especially the Slovenes.

Fearing Serbian intentions, Slovenes and Croats are now balking at attempts to strengthen the role of the central state's plans for greater macroregulation. And this problem will probably get worse because of the April multiparty elections in Slovenia and Croatia, in which competing parties vie over which will best defend local interests against Serbian threats.

Tito legitimized the Yugoslav Communist party through liberation struggles during World War II and the development of a third path: self-management. But his normative system has proven incapable of adjusting to changed political and economic conditions. The country's future now rests with leaders who prefer the logic of the market. For them, self-management is a luxury that not everyone can afford.

**Kenneth Zapp** is a professor at the Metropolitan State University, St. Paul, and **Magda Paleczny-Zapp** is a professor at Augsburg College, Minneapolis.

**Why would workers choose to sell shares in enterprises they now manage? Because, says Yugoslav Vice Prime Minister Zivko Pregl, some firms are facing bankruptcy and need infusions of capital that can be obtained only in this way. Working for foreigners, he says, is better than being unemployed.**

in regional development funds would receive back stock in their companies equal in value to six months wages.

Even so, not all workers councils will decide to sell their enterprises, Pregl says. If such an enterprise is now profitable, the workers would probably prefer to convert it into a cooperative with ownership clearly vested in them. Unprofitable businesses, on the other hand, will be sold—or even given—to foreign owners.

One problem with this process may be appraising the value of the enterprises to be sold. To protect the country from fire-sale grabs by current managers or foreign capitalists, the law provides that a company cannot be sold for less than the book value of its assets. But under the old system of

the decline is a result of the move away from market pricing in the mid-'70s, negative interest rates for credit and the subsequent explosion of the money supply—as well as an absence of macromanagement at the federal level. Pregl believes that employee management should conform to the specific needs of each enterprise, and therefore differ from region to region. With the demise of the federal Yugoslav party and the rise of national parties in the constituent republics, the future role of employees in enterprise decision making is unclear.

**Reason for optimism:** For a quarter of a century, Yugoslavia—alone in Eastern Europe—has used market competition to allocate goods and services. The country's industries already have a consumer orienta-

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# OBITUARY

By James Livingston

**W**ILLIAM APPLEMAN WILLIAMS, ONE OF THE great historians of this century and one of the most influential socialist scholars of our time, died of cancer on March 5 at age 68.

Twenty years ago, when I was still an undergraduate, one of my teachers—who happened to be a Williams student from the University of Wisconsin—called him the intellectual godfather of the New Left in the U.S. At the time I thought it was an incomprehensible and probably an indefensible thing to say. Now I say the same thing in my undergraduate classes. Let me try to explain why and by doing so pay homage to Williams and his ways of learning.

He was born and raised in Iowa, where he learned the hard way about life down on the farm. In 1941, Williams went to the Naval Academy; he was commissioned in 1944 and served with distinction in the Pacific Theater. After the war he was stationed in Corpus Christi, Texas, where he was able to observe (and participate in) the hesitant beginnings of the civil-rights movement, in the organizing of Afro-Americans against the legacies of Jim Crow. In 1948 he left the Navy and enrolled in the history graduate program at Wisconsin. As a student of Fred Harvey Harrington, he wrote a dissertation on U.S.-Russian diplomatic relations from the late 18th to the mid 20th century, which in 1952 became his first book.

**The imperialism of idealism:** With his third book, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1959), Williams came of age as a historian and a critic of modern imperialism. The book is an extended meditation on and reply to George Kennan's *American Diplomacy* (1950). In this quaintly "realist" tract, Kennan—the principal theorist of post-war "containment"—argued that the moralism of modern American foreign policy continually projected the U.S. into irrational and impossible crusades because it could not acknowledge the contours of international power relations. He illustrated the argument by explaining the open-door policy, to which the U.S. has been committed since 1899, as the product of high spirits and sloppy thinking in the State Department, where the limits imposed by the ongoing imperial scramble in China apparently went unnoticed.

Williams therefore focused *Tragedy* on the making and unmaking of the open-door policy. He showed that it was the practical application of a rigorous theory worked out in the context of late 19th century social crisis—a theory of anti-colonial imperialism through which the U.S. policy makers thought they could prevent war between the great powers and preclude mass insurrections in the backward areas of the world (areas that included the American South and West). So conceived, the open door had three aims: (1) to dismantle the exclusive spheres of influence into which the advanced capitalist nations were already dividing the globe; (2) to promote, accordingly, the free international flow of goods and capital, thus increasing the volume of world income and modulating conflict between nations over their respective shares of world income (if the whole thing gets bigger, you don't need to make your slice bigger at the expense of mine); (3) to allow development ("modernization") in pre-capitalist nations or cultures, thus guaranteeing both progress and

## Farewell to intellectual godfather William Appleman Williams

stable international relations through the creation of bourgeois social strata and interests where there were none.

The key to the realization of these aims, according to Williams, was the globalization of the American political economy, the capacity of which had already superseded the limits of domestic demand. In this sense, anti-colonial imperialism offered solutions to both the existing impasse of international relations and the domestic social crisis signified by the populist revolt and violent class conflict in the industrial sector. So the American empire was no accident. The open-door world was quite deliberately chosen, and it worked as well as could be expected in the absence of a hegemonic world power on the order of Great Britain in the 19th century. But as Charles Beard had insisted, it was at bottom a way of exporting the social question. Like Beard, Williams was digging in the documents for an open door at home—he was trying then and thereafter to show us that the most crippling effects of empire could be found here, in the U.S., and that to transcend American imperialism was therefore to transcend American capitalism.

His procedure in this respect was to demonstrate that the open-door policy had hardened into a brittle ideology by the 1940s. The great fear induced by the Great Depression, Williams claimed, led policy makers to identify American power and interests with an anti-communist crusade on a global scale—that is, with an open door, anti-statist world economy enforced by military Keynesianism, in which the Soviet Union necessarily functioned as the crucial constraint on peaceful decolonization and global development under U.S. auspices.

**Social theory and historical method:** By taking issue with the premises and postulates of the Cold War, Williams opened up lines of critical inquiry that would extend into the bimonthly *Studies on the Left*, the most significant journal of the New Left, and into the political education and analysis of Students for a Democratic Society (e.g., its Port Huron Statement of 1962, as well as "America and the New Era" of 1963). Of course Williams had also opened himself to intemperate attacks from the hallowed halls of Harvard, where academics like Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Henry Kissinger and Samuel P. Huntington were preparing for positions on the parapets of the imperial citadel. But then Williams never had much use for the servants of power. He offended them even more deeply with his next three books: *The Contours of American History* (1961), a huge survey that offered, among other things, a new periodization of capitalism in the U.S.; *The United States, Cuba and Castro* (1962), an essay on the class determinants of revolution in the Third World and of counter-insurgent policy in North America; and *The Great Evasion* (1964), a call to incorporate Marx into our thinking about American history and a practical demonstration of how that could be accomplished (which not incidentally examined the redefinition of work made possible by industrial cybernation).

What distinguishes these books, aside

from their extraordinary scope, is a unique combination of social theory and historical method—unique because within the familiar pantheon of New Left precursors, only Williams was able to synthesize these two modes of thought (or "ways of learning," as he would have it). Herbert Marcuse, C. Wright Mills, Norman O. Brown, Hannah Arendt and Sheldon Wolin never applied their grand theories to the empirical details and broad design of American history as Williams did, especially in *Contours*. And so they finally found only cause for debunking and despair in the historical experience of the American people. Instead, Williams found a usable past, which functioned, in his view, as both constraint on and condition of a political passage beyond what he called the age of corporation capitalism.

In *Contours*, for example, he used Wilhelm Dilthey's notion of *Weltanschauung* to periodize American history according to changes in the relation between civil society, state power and cultural-ideological imperatives. By this account, there were three phases in the emergence of capitalism in the New World: the age of mercantilism (1763-1828), the age of laissez-faire (1824-96) and the age of corporation capitalism (1882 to the present). Each phase enabled a *Weltanschauung*, or worldview, that was consistent with the perceived capacities and requirements of American growth and development, but each phase also produced evidence that made its characteristic worldview incoherent or inadequate to the task of imagining the conditions of future development.

Williams wanted to show how honorable and intelligent men and women had managed American development through their commitment to the complex social-cultural system we call capitalism. He was therefore denounced by the liberals for being an economic determinist and criticized by certain sectors of the left for being an idealist or an elitist. He was none of these. Like Antonio Gramsci, he was trying to show us what it would take to imagine, and to assume collective responsibility for, a future in which development would have to be managed according to democratic—i.e., socialist—principles and procedures. In other words, he was trying to show us how much we had to learn from those bourgeois citizens out of our own past who had been able to imagine and create a passage beyond their status quo because they had been able to see the unknown yet evident possibilities of a very different future in the historically developed capacities of the American polity. According to Williams, then, socialism resided in and flowed from the experience of Americans past and present.

**History and politics:** It took him seven years to produce another book. Most of his time in the early '60s was taken up with graduate students or politics (he was eventually exhausted by both and returned to undergraduate teaching at Oregon State University in 1968). The new book, *The Roots of the Modern American Empire* (1969), got better press than anything else he had written, largely, I think, because it

allowed reviewers to say, gee, the farmers were just as bad as the robber barons in promoting overseas markets for surplus American capacity, and thus just as responsible for the American empire. For Williams claimed that in the 1890s the new imperialists had appropriated the arguments of agricultural entrepreneurs who, throughout the 19th century, were seeking to reconstitute effective demand for their products, first by continental expansion, then by access to foreign markets. The reviewers missed the point. What Williams was trying to demonstrate is that a culture animated by possessive individualism will inevitably produce imperial ambitions and atrocities, whether that culture is dominated by farmers or by corporate capitalists.

In the '70s Williams' influence was at its height, even though he retreated into increasingly idiosyncratic variations on the themes of his previous books, (e.g., *America Confronts a Revolutionary World* [1976]). Those themes had now been assimilated by the historical profession—or at least by the diplomatic historians, who, according

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**Williams believed that the possibility of socialism resided in and flowed from the experience of Americans past and present.**

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to surveys by friends and foes alike, favored *Tragedy* over any other text in their undergraduate courses. But the diplomatic historians were, meanwhile, fighting a rear-guard action against the new social historians, who were simply uninterested in the deeds and designs of powerful white men. By the time Williams was elected president of the Organization of American Historians in 1980, therefore, his influence in the profession was already waning. Ten years later, he is all but forgotten outside the narrow confines of diplomatic history.

But not altogether. Last semester a colleague of mine used the new Norton edition of *Contours* in a graduate curriculum. When I asked him why, he said, to my surprise, "These kids need some history on a grand scale—and they can learn from the man's politics." So can we. For Williams taught us at least two indispensable lessons. First, there are no more new frontiers through which we can export the social question. The empire's externalization of evil does not even postpone the day of reckoning, because its domestic effects—the erection of the presidential state, the erosion of democratic procedure, the evisceration of education and the eclipse of citizenship—are also the enabling conditions of imperialist adventure. Second, if we treat socialism as an ethical tradition that has little or no relation to the lived experience of Americans past or present, then we have misunderstood either the meaning of socialism or the meaning of American history. In this sense, what we can learn from the politics of William Appleman Williams is precisely what we can learn from the politics of Eugene Victor Debs.

James Livingston teaches history at Rutgers University.



# IN PRINT



Martin Kozlowski/ONYX

## The debt fiasco: a crisis that just won't go away

### Debt and Disorder: International Economic Instability and U.S. Imperial Decline

By Arthur MacEwan

Monthly Review Press, 144 pp., \$10

### Instability and Change in the World Economy

Edited by Arthur MacEwan and  
William K. Tabb

Monthly Review Press, 384 pp., \$18

By James M. Cypher

**T**HE LOST DECADE OF THE 1980s ended without resolution of the Third World debt crisis. Nor had any steps been taken to lessen the untenable international trade position of the U.S. that had made it the world's largest debtor nation.

Yet by 1990 these two signs of profound global economic imbalance command little public interest. Crowded off center stage by the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe and the USSR, the simmering disarray of the global economic order had become too omnipresent to evoke much attention.

Unlike their counterparts in most nations, the U.S. populace is not accustomed to facing international economic issues. A strong and relatively isolated economy long afforded them the luxury of ignorance. This happy state, alas, is now irretrievably lost.

Since the '70s, the signs of growing international economic integration have become unmistakable—as have indications of the relative decline of U.S. economic power within

a new global economy. From autos through banking to the fast-food industry, the growing tendency toward

### ECONOMY

internationalization is indisputable. Even the federal government is now dependent on the international capital markets to fund much of its annual deficit.

**People in the U.S. are not accustomed to facing international economic issues.**

More than 3.5 million skilled U.S. manufacturing jobs were lost to foreign imports during the '70s and '80s. As the 1990s began, the auto industry braced itself for another round of intensified global competition. Few commentators were willing to believe that the U.S. auto producers had the acumen to match the pace of the Japanese. Following on the footsteps of Britain, the U.S. was steadily, if slowly, deindustrializing. Global integration/national disintegration will likely become the watchwords of the '90s.

**Accounting for change:** Most in the U.S. seem aware that a vaguely sinister change has taken place. Why has a shadow fallen on them, and where did it come from? Those in search of an answer could hardly do better than read Arthur MacEwan's

*Debt and Disorder: International Economic Instability and U.S. Imperial Decline.*

MacEwan's book is designed for the general reader who has minimal background in international economics and little time to devote to the matter. As a quick introduction it serves well. MacEwan addresses some of the most serious and intractable problems of the global economy, always attempting to show how they have arisen and why they interconnect.

One central part of the story commenced in the early '70s: stuffed with cash and able to circumvent banking regulations through the creation of the Eurocurrency market, the global banks engaged in "loan pushing" to the Third World and Eastern Europe. With energy prices soaring, the



banks could also throw the new dollars received by the OPEC nations into play. When the dust cleared in the early '80s and the "debt crisis" began, most observers were surprised to find that the Third World was now strapped with a debt of \$830 billion. By 1989 that debt had risen to \$1.3 trillion. It was unpayable.

**Done with mirrors:** Through the '80s a good deal of effort went into defusing the debt time bomb. By 1990 the banks had managed to circumvent a number of their difficulties, primarily through complex renegotiations that stretched out debt repayments and through new guarantees that shifted the ultimate risk of default onto multilateral agencies such as the World Bank.

For the Latin American nations, the '80s illustrated the absurdity of the current situation—from 1980 through 1989, the Latin nations had shipped roughly \$300 billion north to pay on their debts. But the total external debt had meanwhile grown by \$190 billion (to \$415 billion) in the course of the '80s. The banks substantially improved their situation as Latin America watched a bad situation deteriorate.

MacEwan asks, why not default? Because debt renegotiations have provided an alternative to default, and because the Latin American elites who hold political power view themselves as important, responsible "partners" in the international economic system. "Silent default" has also become an important response to the debt crisis. In Latin America only five countries are now meeting their debt obligations—the rest, including most of the biggest debtors, have fallen behind in their payments.

The *real* crisis behind the debt crisis entails the "restructuring" of the debtor nations at the behest of the World Bank's economists. Pressed for international credits that will not be forthcoming from the now-wary private banks, the poor nations must accept the harsh terms of multilateral creditors—such as the World Bank. These creditors have demanded that the debtor nations "modernize" their economies through "pro-growth policies."

Decoded, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other lenders are demanding that any and all impediments to the free play of market forces be removed. In practice, these new policies greatly strengthen the hand of the multinational corporations from the advanced nations.

**The Brady bunch:** One example of the U.S.' inability to maintain its global leadership is the "Brady Plan." Unveiled in 1989 by Secretary of the Treasury Nicholas Brady, it was to combine (1) new lending from the U.S. government, agencies of the Japanese government and the multinational banks with (2) additional new private-bank lending and (3) a write-down of the face value of some of the old debt. All in all (adding new money and the value of the write-downs together), the Brady Plan was to provide debt relief of only \$70 billion (against a debt mountain of \$1.3 trillion).

Eleven months later, in February 1990, the Brady Plan yielded meager results in its first application. While Brady ecstatically asserted that "this is an enormously successful financing" and Mexico's president claimed that the burden of debt had been "removed from the shoulders of the Mexican people," the *Wall Street*

*Journal* accurately termed the Mexican debt deal a "failure." Mexico managed to write off about \$7 billion of old debt while borrowing an additional \$7 billion. Annual interest payments went down about 10 percent, giving the Mexican treasury an additional \$1.3 billion to spend inside Mexico. The money saved will quick-

## "Silent default" has become an important response to the debt crisis. In Latin America, only five countries are now meeting their debt obligations.

ly be spent on Mexico's deteriorating infrastructure (highways, water and sewage, schools, etc.) and on items such as imported beans, rice and corn. The Brady deal will not end Mexico's crisis, or even appreciably diminish it.

While MacEwan guides the reader through the debt crisis and issues of U.S. trade, numerous more complex issues pertaining to the global disorder remain untouched. Fortunately, however, anyone interested in these issues will find *Instability and Change in the World Economy*, edited by MacEwan and William K. Tabb, an indispensable source of information and understanding.

**Stagnation and fresh analyses:** *Instability and Change* is a powerful collection of readings from some of the best U.S. and European researchers who have attempted to puzzle through the most perplexing aspects of international political economy. Skillfully edited, these 18 essays provide up-to-date information on the fast-changing global economic order.

Among the many fine articles, James Petras and Morris Morely's essay "The Imperial State in the Rise and Fall of U.S. Imperialism" is particularly profound. Petras and Morely trace the relative decline of the U.S. economy to the power elite's fascination with rightist ideology and national-security issues—at the

(dis)order is given sound treatment in this book: James Crotty lays bare the failures of vision of those who have controlled macroeconomic policy in the U.S., Gerald Epstein clearly and concisely sums up the essence of change in international finance. Three essays are devoted to the new international division of labor (one addresses the high incidence of women workers within the global assembly line).

The global production of autos, oil and textiles all receive separate treatment. Robert Wood explains the most recent, fundamental changes at the World Bank and the IMF. Co-editor Tabb contributes an important discussion on U.S. labor. Fittingly, Harry Magdoff has the last word. Magdoff cogently challenges the view that Europe in 1992 will provide a new beginning for the global economy. His is a sobering antidote to the view that a panacea is close at hand.

Missing from the book is a much-needed discussion of Asian political economy. We learn little about Africa or India and not enough about Europe, especially Germany. (Eastern Europe and the USSR are not discussed).

Clearly there is a crying need in the Third World and the advanced nations to seize the new globalizing forces and bend them in such a way that ordinary people cease to be crushed by ever more mobile, ever more audacious and ever more powerful banks and multinational corporations. But how? That answer is not provided.

Yet *Instability and Change* fills a void and fills it well. It is an original, indispensable guide into and through the labyrinth of global economic disorder.

James M. Cypher teaches economics at California State University-Fresno. He writes frequently on the U.S. and global political economy.

## NOTEBOOK

### Women's Asia

By Yayori Matsui  
Zed Books, 172 pp., \$12.50

You can make a strong case that women in Asia are the single most exploited group of human beings in the world. The glowing mainstream press accounts of the economic miracles that have taken place in a few countries leave out the very people who make growth possible: Korean women in cramped lofts, bent over their sewing machines; or Malaysian women, peering into microscopes assembling electronic gear in export factories that hum 24 hours a day.

Yayori Matsui, a Japanese journalist, has traveled the continent listening to women. In Kuala Lumpur, she learned that the assemblers, in addition to suffering from low wages and oppressive working conditions, are also socially stigmatized. "They are often called 'mina current' [electric woman]. This means hot or sexy woman, or immoral woman. ... They think their jobs are inferior even to those of farmers

who can at least make their own decisions."

"Free market" economists have no concern at all for the women (and men) who cannot find places in the new factories, which provide work to only a minority. So hundreds of thousands of Filipinos and Pakistanis must migrate, often to other continents, to find work. Women suffer either way. If they leave to work as housemaids or in other low-paid jobs, they are lonely and just about defenseless against super-exploitation; if their husbands make the trek, they have to live at home as grass widows for much of their adult lives. In Pakistan, Matsui even discovered something called "the Dubai syndrome," which she learned was "a neurotic condition affecting women whose husbands are working in Dubai and other Middle East countries."

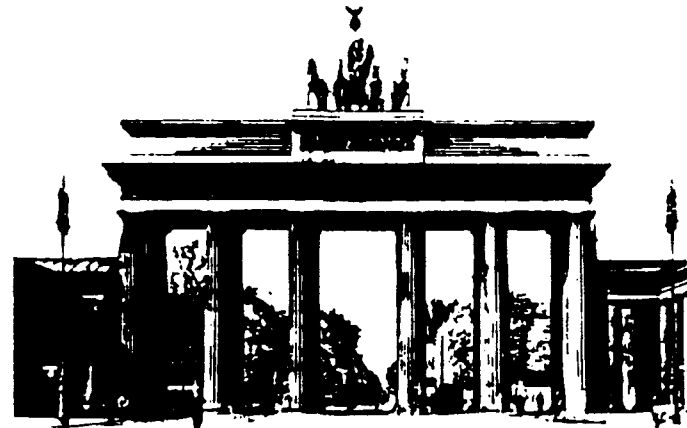
Another reality that does not show up in the formal economic statistics is prostitution, which is often the last resort for women who cannot find work in the "free

marketplace." Matsui learned that in Bangkok alone there are 700,000 prostitutes, and that a major Philippine industry is "sex tourism," which caters to visitors from Japan and elsewhere. Those bright accounts of East Asian economic success should have enough integrity to reckon with the 200,000 prostitutes who hang out on Manila streetcorners, many of them hungry children.

With *Women's Asia*, Zed Books is once again showing why it is the single most effective, vital and vibrant publisher specializing in the Third World. Its several hundred titles are an indispensable guide to the parts of the planet where most of humanity lives and works. Zed and its low-paid, hardworking London staff (it is organized as a genuine cooperative) deserve a lot of credit for bringing out book after book in which people speak who are otherwise silent. (Available from Humanities Press International, 171 First Ave., Atlantic Highlands, N.J. 07716, (800) 221-3845.)

—James North

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**The Handmaid's Tale**  
Directed by Volker Schlöndorff

By Laura Flanders

**T**HE HANDMAID'S TALE MAKES A valiant effort to translate Margaret Atwood's ominous 1985 novel to the screen. There stand the post-revolutionary Guardians in black uniforms; the Aunts, tutoring fertile women in obedience to the ovary; and the barren Wives in their stiff, upper-crust blue, oozing resentment. Prot-

## FILM

estant hymns swell the soundtrack, along with the sound of helicopter propeller blades and troop commands. Yet there is a chill factor missing.

Atwood's story, set in a none-too-futuristic version of the U.S., "a few years from now," depicts a nameless Handmaid forced into sexual service at the home of an important Commander and his chain-smoking, child-lusting wife. Right-wing fundamentalists are in charge of the government, and non-white, non-Christian "asocials" have been exiled to the "Colonies," to be eaten away by toxic waste. In the face of mass infertility induced by an immunodeficiency disease and environmental pollution, the state's raison d'être is breeding. And the burden rests literally on the backs of the "Handmaids," who are pressed into production for the ruling class.

"I guess I was tired of having people say, 'It can't happen here,'" says Atwood in the film's production notes. "They were right only if you accepted their definition of 'it.' ... If you wanted to take over the United States today, what flag could you wave successfully?"

**Credit-card control:** Atwood's book was minutely detailed, from musing over why men urinate together ("the body exposed for inspection and comparison") to discussing how the transfer of credit-card control could bestow personal



New wives tales: Natasha Richardson and Robert Duvall in *The Handmaid's Tale*.

## The Handmaid's Tale's near futurism misses chill factor

as well as economic authority: "We are not each other's anymore. Instead, I am his," says the Handmaid.

But where Atwood delicately stitched together her Handmaid's history and traced her fictional Gilead back to an eerily familiar anti-porn, anti-pleasure epoch, director Volker Schlöndorff (*The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum* and *The Tin Drum*) lands his cinema audience in the heart of the tale with no tracks left to follow. The mechanics of the Bible-toting takeover are ignored, and with that, the discomforting poignancy of much of the story is lost.

"It's a war of the sexes much more than any religious/political war," says Schlöndorff. "It's about female sexuality, and very much about how your emotional needs may be exploited."

Perhaps that is the film's problem right there. *The Handmaid's Tale*,

film version, offered a delicious opportunity to explore the not-so-paranoid realm of misogynist revolution: the grafting of racism and class disempowerment onto a fundamentally anti-woman culture parading in the wolf's clothing of "pro-motherhood." It's happened before and is happening again. Does Schlöndorff see "female sexuality" in the world of the Romanian pregnancy police—poised in every factory to monitor and investigate disappearing abdominal swellings?

Schlöndorff's emphasis on his protagonist's sexuality leads him to focus on the individual hero, played by Natasha Richardson. The dynamics of control are subordinated. The novel's story of a politically naive "everywoman" ("The newspaper stories were like dreams to us. Bad dreams dreamt by others") becomes the drama of an acerbic rebel-to-be. Flaunting Richardson's classically

waspy good looks, the filmmaker strips the Handmaid of the winged clerical bonnet described in the novel and leaves Richardson mostly

**"It's a war of the sexes much more than any religious/political war," says director Volker Schlöndorff about his film of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.**

unveiled, playing savvy ally to Elizabeth McGovern's excellently portrayed Moira—a lesbian "gender traitor" determined to preserve some intellectual, if not sexual, autonomy.

**Déjà viewing:** Most damagingly, the translation of the novel's inner dialogue into a straight, spoken screenplay—albeit a screenplay by Harold Pinter—sacrifices the interior drama and loses completely the stifling isolation of the novel's lonely narration.

It is in the details that the film makes its mark. A television report on an anti-insurgency campaign could hardly fail to remind one of the Panamanian invasion. "The terrorists are totally isolated and will be overpowered in a matter of hours," a Ted Koppel type announces as entire neighborhoods smolder beneath the flames of massive rocket fire.

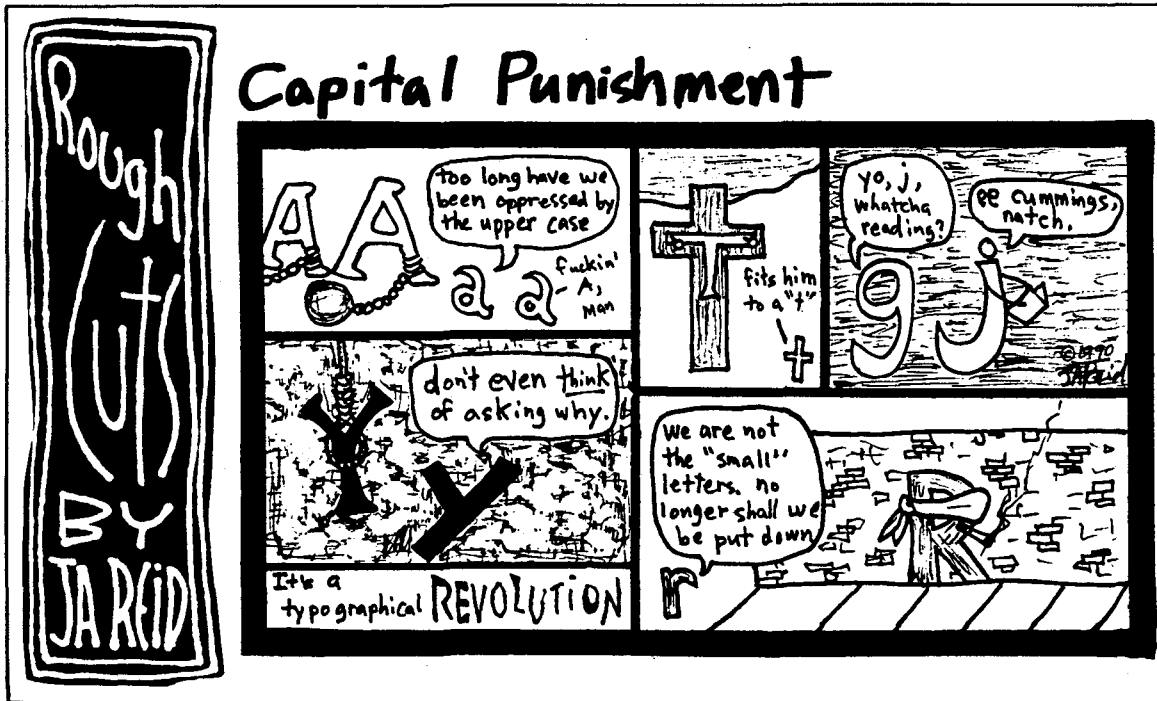
One of the film's most memorable scenes shows the Handmaids

gathering in a sports field with the Wives and Aunts looking on. High on a scaffold, a wayward "unwoman" is presented and noosed, the rope around her neck running back into the Handmaid audience for them collectively to pull, hauling her neck-first to her death. The Salvaging, as Atwood dubs it, is patterned on collective hangings in the 17th century.

But whereas Atwood's novel posed uncomfortably familiar questions, Schlöndorff and Pinter rush to tidy up the picture. In her story about male dependency—masked, as ever, by female enslavement—Atwood toyed with the conclusion that women could be subordinated to their biological function and still find power in their role. She came close, but she teetered and attached an epilogue in which a woman reappears as analyst-academic, participating in a critical assessment of the tale's narrator. The filmmakers edit out debate, creating a dismal finale in which the Handmaid is driven to act by her determination to rear her own child and escapes to a hilltop to await a birth (a "free" birth?), making tea while her rescuer fights the revolution.

*The Handmaid's Tale* is thought-provoking, but when it comes to sending shivers down one's spine, the film's effect is nowhere near as icy as the year's pictures from Romania. With Schlöndorff's help, *The Handmaid's Tale* is safely self-contained in a story frame whose origins are left vague and remote. Meanwhile, in Romania, the only country besides the U.S. where permissive abortion legislation has been deliberalized, the departure of the U.S.' trading partner, Nicolae Ceaucescu, revealed a maternal death rate close to 150 per 100,000: 86 percent of those deaths attributable to botched illegal abortions. *The Handmaid's Tale* is too much of a story and too little of a warning, but then, perhaps we don't need fiction to provoke our worst fears. ■

Laura Flanders is a writer living in New York.





By Patrick Z. McGavin

IN THE MOVIES WHAT USUALLY DEFINES or sets apart a "star" is the way he or she relates to the camera. It's not about talent or ambition but an elusive presence. Chow Yun-Fat is the reigning superstar of a vigorous Hong Kong cinema, an icon incarnate. If he's completely unknown in this country, you soon realize it's our collective loss.

## FILM

Chow Yun-Fat. The name itself plays like a bad joke, or Chandler on acid. The various spellings attributed to Chow only add to the confusion. In American cities with large Chinese populations, a welter of exhibitors showcase the films of the madly prolific Chow, who routinely makes six or seven movies a year. At last Chow's *oeuvre* has reached above ground. In February two major retrospectives ran simultaneously at New York's Asia Society and Chicago's Film Center of the Art Institute. What's more, John Woo's perverse, flamboyant *The Killer*, which stars Chow as a coolly detached professional hit man, is being positioned for an "art house" release this July after its acquisition by the Washington, D.C.-based Circle Films Releasing.

Finding background material on Chow proves more difficult than screening his films. To date there have been only two articles published on Chow in the West, a September 1984 *Cahiers du Cinema* article and a June 1988 interview in *Film Comment*. "He's the Asian Michael Caine, but better," says Ric Meyers, editor of *Martial Arts Movie Association*. "You can't say that he has a wide following in this country from non-Chinese audiences, but people who go to film festivals know him and like him a lot."

Chow Yun-Fat is tall and friendly. When he locks in on you with those eyes, you sense his magnetic presence. "I don't know why, but when I'm facing the camera, I feel relaxed and full of energy," Chow says. He arranges his thoughts slowly and carefully, at times uncertain of his English. No matter the nature of the question, his responses are lean and taut.

**No time to think:** The Hong Kong cinema is steeped in mythology and ritual, with a strict adherence to "genre." Is it possible to read political commentary on Hong Kong life into this mass film output? "No," he answers quickly. "Our movies are quite simple. I never think about [a political context]. Most of these films have a strong dramatic structure," Chow says. What is truly remarkable about Chow is his productivity. In 1988 he made 12 films, shooting as many as three movies at once.

Does he fear overexposure? "Yes, at times it's been a problem. In the future I'm going to cut down," he says. In 1974, following a rigorous one-year apprenticeship in the theater, Chow was quickly signed to a

# Chow Yun-Fat: king of Hong Kong

10-year television contract on Hong Kong TV. Though the often third-rate (by American standards) production facilities created difficult working conditions, Chow's versatility was immediately evident. He moved effortlessly from action thrillers to high farce, combining a deft comic flair with highly stylized, imposing physical movements. The inevitable progression into film roles began with a series of bit parts, rounding off with a star-making role in Ann Hui's 1981 *The Story of Woo Viet*.

"Hong Kong is very practical; you cannot go back to television once you've done films," he says. "Once you hit it big with one film, they expect you to come back big with a second film."

**A better tomorrow:** A vibrant, highly charged national cinema, Hong Kong movies are deliriously kinetic, informed by a deep and passionate love of the movies. "In Hong Kong, we can do anything with a straight face; it's the least self-conscious movie industry in the world," says Terence Chang, general manager of Film Workshop, a production company. Chang says, "Just Chow's name can guarantee profit" in the highly competitive Hong Kong marketplace.

Chow's signature films are a violent cycle of gangster melodramas made in collaboration with Woo and Tsui Hark, the best known being *A Better Tomorrow*, *A Better Tomorrow II*, *A Better Tomorrow III* (a.k.a. *Love and Death in Saigon*) and *The Killer*. Chow is invariably cast as the moody, introspective loner. Amoral and adrift, he carries out his assignments with a ruthless precision. "He's the best gunman I've ever seen in a film," declares Meyers. "Chow creates a wave of energy an audience can just ride on."

At once swift, brutal and exhilarating, these nearly self-parodistic crime epics are punctuated by an exaggerated, obsessive regard for twisted, poetic violence. They also generally introduce subtexts and themes (homoeroticism, religion as fetish) that most American films regularly shy from.

Although some critics and historians view the Hong Kong cinema as a corollary to the Hollywood studio system of the '30s and '40s, especially the Warners crime melodramas, Chow believes Hong Kong

**Hong Kong films  
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the movies.**

movies must be judged individually. "I don't think you can make that connection, because even though you could say the gangster roles are the leading parts in the Hong Kong industry, after a few years maybe the comedy will replace it. The Hong Kong market is quite strange. You cannot compare or link them to the Hollywood films," says Chow.

**What becomes a legend:** Chow has also appeared in the celebrated works of Tony Au (*Dream Lovers*), Lar Kar Leung (*Tiger on the Beat*) and Sun Chung (*City War*). Unlike Jackie Chan, Chow doesn't direct any of his films, allowing his collaborators the latitude to shape his persona. "I'm not interested in directing films," he says. "Before the shooting begins, I have an idea of how I want to work with the director. We rarely work with a full script; in fact, when we're doing location shooting, we're still discussing the dialogue."

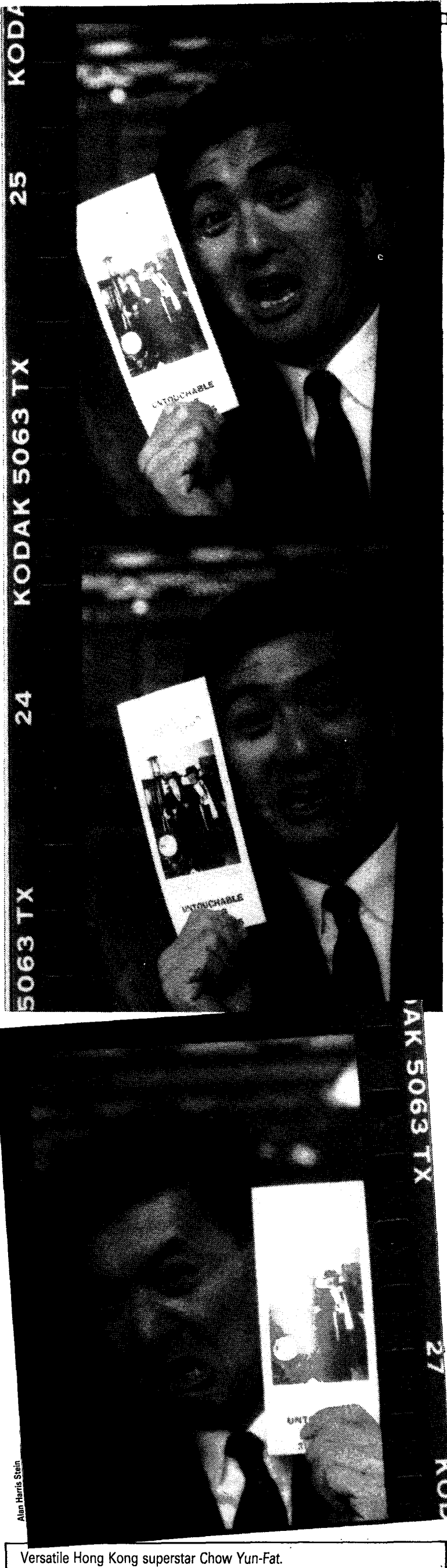
It's not terribly surprising to find that Chow's favorite American actors are Robert DeNiro and Robert Duvall. But he allows that in Hong Kong's industry "there's not a lot of time to research the role. Not like what DeNiro went through in *Taxi Driver*. The schedules are very tight."

Though he's a living legend at home, with no American equivalent, Chow reports that he and his wife are able to lead a normal life. Celebrity has not encroached on their lifestyle. "I can handle it. I go to the market and no one bothers me. Actually most of the people treat me like an old friend, like a neighborhood son. They never treat me like a movie star. I enjoy the attention, and we still have our private lives."

The only persistent question is whether Chow will be seduced by Hollywood. "It depends on how Terence [Chang] pushes my career," he laughs. At this point Chang interjects, "Because of the professionals involved in the cinema and the facilities at hand, that's what interests Chow. It's not because he wants to make American films, necessarily." Chow concedes his English would have to improve before he appeared in any English-language films. But a greater concern is that he not become a stereotypical Asian heavy.

Chan has made two American films (*The Big Brawl* and *The Protector*), but Chow insists there's no rivalry between them. "Am I jealous of Jackie Chan?" he laughs. "No, he does his films his way and I do mine my way." Assessing the career of Chow Yun-Fat, one is struck by a profound skill and a range that many American actors would kill for. In the larger picture, that's something that can't be lost in translation. ■

Patrick Z. McGavin is a writer living in Chicago.



Versatile Hong Kong superstar Chow Yun-Fat.



# SLAPPs

Continued from page 11

afford to represent themselves, and many don't want to go through the litigation process. It's quite frightening for them."

Thus, experts who have studied the trend warn that those who file the suits often achieve their purposes without a legal victory. Often the underlying political issue is moot by the time the case is dismissed, and not only does the lawsuit divert attention from the issue but it causes a ripple effect by chilling future opposition. As Eunice Edgar, executive director of Milwaukee's ACLU, says, "People will think twice about making any comment on an issue of public concern."

In other situations, it might invigorate someone to fight the good fight. That's what happened after Betty Johnson, a housewife, circulated a petition to persuade the city council of Louisville, Colo., not to annex a tract of land designated for housing development. The developer retaliated and sued Johnson, three other citizens and the town itself for defamation. The ACLU defended Johnson and the others on the grounds that they were exercising their First Amendment rights, and the case was dismissed. Judge Michael R. Enwall of Boulder County District Court dismissed the case, ruling that "the activity of this litigation is, prima facie, political, protected First Amendment activity on the part of these individual defendants.... The existence, therefore, of this lawsuit has a chilling effect on that activity." The case had a happy ending: not only were the defendants awarded attorneys' fees but Betty Johnson followed with a successful bid for a seat on

her city council.

**Like a disease:** Attorney David Atkin, a sole practitioner in Eugene, Ore., explains the increase in SLAPPs this way: "It's a certain change toward a more Machiavellian approach on the part of American business in dealing with their opponents." In 1987 Atkin represented six people who protested the logging of forests north of Oregon's Kalmiopsis wilderness area. The six had gone to a roadless area where some 70 people showed up for a demonstration at a Huffman and Wright timber yard just before a timber sale. The demonstrators climbed over a locked gate and chained themselves to logging equipment. The six were charged with criminal mischief, a misdemeanor, given 30-day jail terms and ordered to pay \$500 each in restitution. After the fines were paid, half the sentence was served and the other half suspended, the Huffman and Wright logging company filed a civil suit, based on trespassing, against the six individuals and won \$25,000 more in punitive damages after a week-long trial.

Atkin is appealing the decision. "They're a multimillion-dollar company with the money to make sure nobody speaks up against their practices," he says.

But those who file these suits don't acknowledge intimidation as a factor. Harold Huffman of Huffman and Wright, for example, told *Sierra Magazine*, "I don't spend that kind of money to intimidate. I don't believe they have the right to physically keep me from my means of support."

**SLAPPING back:** Perhaps the most potent tool against SLAPPs is the "SLAPP-back," which was used in about 20 percent of the cases Canan and Pring studied. Proving that

turnabout is fair play, more and more defendants are suing the SLAPP filers for malicious prosecution, abuse of process or interference with the constitutional right to petition. That's what the three farmers in central California did when they countersued J.G. Boswell for unspecified damages. In 1988 a jury awarded them \$13.5 million. Boswell is appealing the decision.

When Sacramento lawyer Ramond Leonardini, who represented a plumbers' union, told the Department of Housing in 1980 that a plastic pipe manufactured by Shell Oil contained DEHP, an animal carcinogen, Shell turned around and sued him for trade libel. The case was dismissed some nine months later, and Leonardini countersued. In May 1986, the case went to trial and a jury awarded Leonardini \$5.5 million. In December 1989, an appeals court upheld the decision. Despite his success, Leonardini is somewhat cynical about the whole process.

"Everybody says, 'Well, the judicial sys-

tem works," he says. "It's not true and these multinational corporations know it, so they blister you with papers and motions. This kind of terrorizing, where a big company tries to silence you, goes on all over the place. Most of the time they accomplish their purpose and, in that sense, they are above the law." (Lawyers representing Shell refused to comment on the case.)

But experts are hopeful that if the pendulum continues to swing the other way through SLAPP-backs, fewer political-intimidation lawsuits will be filed. "I think it's making people think twice before filing these suits," Canan says. "In the long run, SLAPP-backs may act as a deterrent toward these cases. If defendants turn these cases around, keep the filers tied up in court for years and come out with large awards, it's hard for these companies to internalize these costs. And that's a bottom line they understand."

**Stacey Colino** is a San Francisco-based writer who frequently writes about legal issues.

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### PHILADELPHIA/BOSTON

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"Eyewitness Account: The Democratic Revolution in Eastern Europe," with Daniel Singer, European correspondent for *The Nation*.

Monday, April 2—Philadelphia: 12:30 p.m. at Temple University, 12th & Berks Mall, Gladfelter Hall, 9th Floor; 8 p.m. at University of Pennsylvania, 34th & Spruce, Houston Hall, Bodek Lounge, Main Floor. For information, (215) 843-2313.

Tuesday, April 3—Boston: 1 p.m. at Center for International Studies/MIT, 292 Main St., Cambridge, 7th Floor; 4 p.m. at Brandeis University, Alumni Lounge, USDAN Student Center; 8 p.m. meeting to be announced. For information, (617) 426-9026. All meetings are free and open to the public. Sponsored by the Democratic Socialists of America, 15 Dutch St., New York, NY 10038.

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April 19

Second Annual Provost's Mini-Symposium, THE DAWNING OF A NEW ERA? Speakers are Norman Hodges, Dennis Brutus, Georgina Ashworth, Maria Patricia Fernandez-Kelly and Kevin Reilly. Contact: Irwin Marcus, History Department, IUP, Indiana, PA 15705, (415) 357-2237 or 2284.

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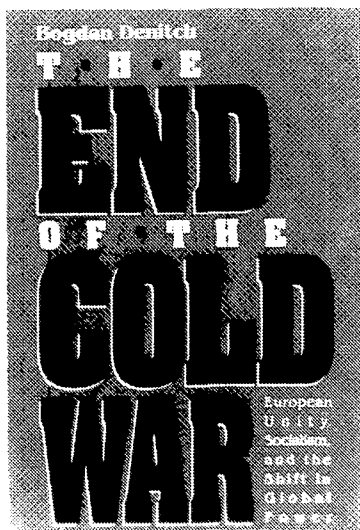
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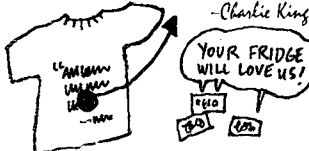
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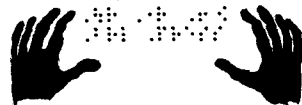
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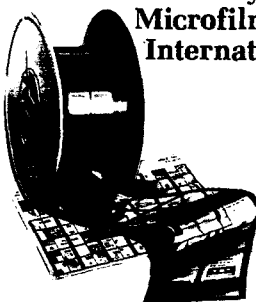
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# Wild

# Harry

After 20-odd years of

cinematic suspended animation,

*The Plot Against Harry*

## The Plot Against Harry

Directed by Michael Roemer

By Pat Aufderheide

In 1969, they weren't ready for a film that combines John Waters' weird-as-normal/normal-as-weird reversals with Woody Allen's exasperated but sentimental view of urban Jewish culture. Well, they are now.

Michael Roemer, a Nazi-era German refugee who ended up in the U.S., made the film with now-renowned filmmaker Robert M. Young (*Ballad of Gregoria Cortez*, *Dominick and Eugene*, *Triumph of the Spirit*) as his producer and cameraman. The wry tale of a small-time numbers runner who's baffled by the rich urban Jewish culture he's thrown back into when he comes out of jail was received with equal bafflement—if not hostility—by 1969 preview audiences, and it died before distribution.

Twenty years later Roemer revived it, after making a video of the nearly finished film for his children and finding a smash reception among new trial audiences. The film went on to become the darling of film festivals and now is on the repertory circuit.

You can see why the film might have missed its mark the first time around. Roemer, who also wrote the script and cast the film outside normal casting circuits, did not play by the rules.

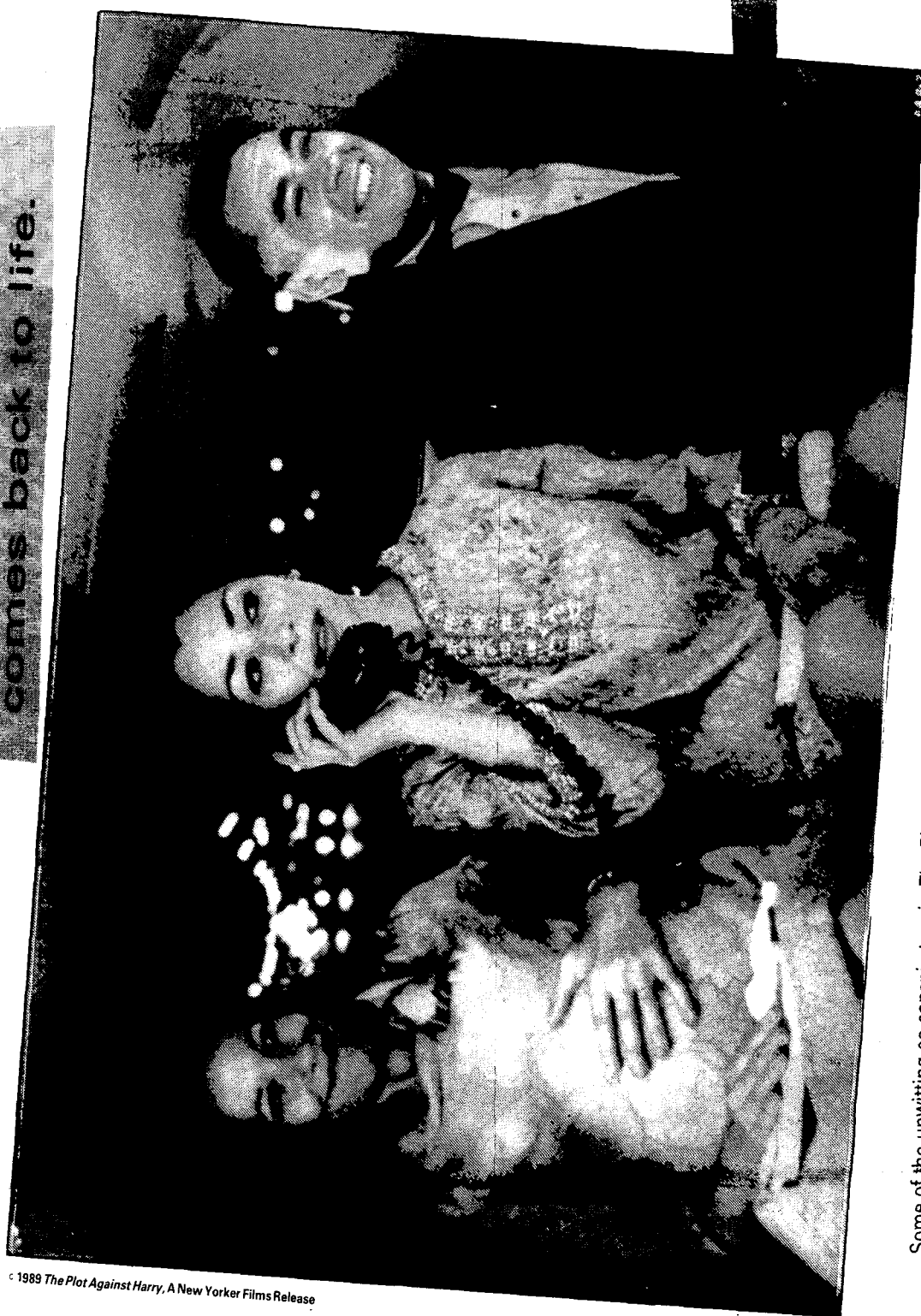
**Family business:** Harry Plotnick (Martin Priest) is not a hero, and also not—at least by his lights—a bad guy. He's spent his life mastering the rules of his living and is now trying to retake his business from encroaching hustlers. Sure, it's illegal and sometimes it's rough ("I don't want him hurt too bad—just so he don't work my side of the street"), but it's also a time-honored American business.

His real problem, though, isn't with the numbers racket. It's with his family. His sister Mae (Ellen Herbert) doesn't know his line of work; she lives a sheltered life of gossip and comfort, trying to draw him into it. Then, through an improbable car accident, Harry is reunited with his ex-wife Kay (Maxine Woods), his pregnant daughter (Sandra Kazan) and his brother-in-law Leo (Ben Lang) who is in the catering business.

Soon Harry discovers a heretofore unknown daughter (Margo Solin) who's a model in the lingerie business. Leo's wealthy friends Jack and Irene (Jacques Taylor and Jean Leslie) virtually adopt him. Irene decides to make him the object of her graduate study, treating him like an anthropological subject. (Of course, the real ethnography is the film's probing of the various worlds Harry blunders haplessly into, as seen through his deadpan bemused eyes.)

None of these characters is any better or worse than Harry. If they sometime verge on caricature, they also manage to be flesh-and-blood

comes back to life.



© 1989 The Plot Against Harry, A New Yorker Films Release

Some of the unwitting co-conspirators in *The Plot Against Harry*: Sandra Kazan, Maxine Woods and Ben Lang.

characters. And they all drive Harry crazy. He struggles to come to terms with his newfound social obligations and decides to testify before a congressional committee on crime, which precipitates further confrontations—with propriety and the law.

The joy in *The Plot Against Harry* isn't so much in the plot, which gets baroque but never confused. The real fun is in the juxtaposition of social isolate Harry and the minicultures he morosely allows to impose upon him. It's an incremental humor. The movie grows on you; you gradually come to accept it the way Harry, flatfooted and resigned, does. (And then sometimes it sneaks up on you and makes you laugh at the small stuff.)

**Seeing is believing:** The worlds Harry is plunged into are revealed not only through the witty script but through the camerawork of Robert M. Young. Young is fascinated by the way behavior reveals character and by the way small-scale interaction reveals the terms of social life. All his work is suffused by the mutual qualities of respect and fascination; it's an approach that turns naivete into wisdom.

Young's camera style captures the idiosyncratic and revelatory moment, making it easy to show, not tell. And *The Plot Against Harry* is all showing; it's the opposite of didactic (another point working against it in a pre-postmodernist age, before even the aleatory became chic).

Action is often framed from the perspective of Harry's own puzzled stare. Take the sight of the three accident victims settling into Harry's back seat—even using his car phone. Or the horrifying sight of family and friends descending upon him like an insanely smiling horde. Or a pacing prostitute who can't believe Harry wants only to talk. Or the implacable face of the parole officer who lives in a universe parallel to Harry's.

Sometimes Harry is the uncomfortable center of a swirl of activity—for example, when he's trapped in the bedroom while his daughter and son-in-law talk about what to photograph at his grandson's bris. And sometimes the camera stops just to focus on, say, a passing bit of street life or a corner of an active room, or the lumbering gait of Harry's factotum.

*The Plot Against Harry* crowned the collaboration of Roemer and Young. They had worked together

on *Cortile Cascino*, a 1962 NBC White Paper on poverty in Sicily; the documentary so shocked NBC that it was never aired, though it's become a classic since. They then jointly wrote and produced *Nothing but a Man* (1964), a remarkable independent film about cross-class love in a Southern black community. Slightly stilted, it's still the rare film about black culture in which character and situation go beyond cliché.

In *The Plot Against Harry*, they teamed up on familiar cultural territory to produce a loving, biting, deadpan group portrait with schlemiel. If there's a message, maybe it's the one the unctuous announcer delivers while Harry, convinced he's on his deathbed, donates big bucks at a telethon: "Life isn't just stranger than fiction—but more beautiful and more real." To which Harry might say, "Yeah, yeah."

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